

# the christian SCHOLAR



**The Modest Optimism of Albert Camus / Nathan Scott  
and other articles and reviews**

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## THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

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# The Christian Scholar

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## THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

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## The Editor's Preface

The first essay in this issue is an excellent treatment of the ideas of the contemporary French novelist, Albert Camus, by Professor Nathan A. Scott, Jr. whose work in behalf of this journal and in a number of books and articles is already well known to many of our readers. My comment here is intended to reflect not upon the literary and theological analysis of Camus' writing which Professor Scott treats but rather upon the point he makes that Camus is a central figure in the great literature of our period because of the clarity with which he depicts the modern human situation wherein man finds he must continue to live and work though he is deprived of the sustaining power of faith and empty of the incentives of hope. Man is left to seek out such meanings as he may come upon, but ultimate answers are nowhere given to satisfy his hunger for a rational and meaningful understanding of it all. In Camus' estimate man is up against a mute and an abandoned universe; nothing is at the center and nothing is at the end. If he seeks congruence in faith he stands in peril of committing "philosophical suicide." Thus there is no way out of or over the absurdity of the human situation. Yet there is a basis on which the life of the human creature may be carried on, rectified, and renewed. It is tenuous but genuine, even as the optimism is modest but real.

Is this the shape of modern man's

loss and discontent? Does he miss something ultimate which he nevertheless cannot affirm? So indeed says much of the most penetrating writing of our day. Modern man suffers a crisis of faith — he cannot believe but he has no peace in unbelief.

As Margaret Mead points out in her biography of Ruth Benedict who has abandoned the faith of her family, she committed herself to no church, no party, no theories of life, and hence she did not "vanish into the maw of some completely accepted orthodoxy." Yet Miss Benedict, during her first visit to Paris, stood sadly in the immense beauty of the cathedral of Notre Dame and whispered, "Isn't it unbearable that it is all about nothing?" Modern man has seen or heard of a distant City, once inhabited, but he is outside its gates and to all appearance it is abandoned. He has desired it, it will not let him go even if it is now empty: but he needs its towers on his horizon. The *Dialogues of Mortality* from which Rose Macaulay quotes at the opening of *The Towers of Trebizond* give us some clues to its inaccessibility to modern men:

... its light flickers always on the roads they tread, to plague them like marsh fires. Even though they flee from it, it may drag them towards it as a magnet drags steel, and, though they may never enter its gates, its light will burn them as with fire, for that is its nature.

Who then were the builders of this dangerous city? Gods and men,

Eroton; men seeking after gods, and gods who seek after men. Does it not appear to you that such a fabric, part artifact and part deifact, reared out of divine intimations and demands, and out of the mortal longings and imaginings that climb to meet these, must perpetually haunt the minds of men, wielding over them a strange wild power, intermittent indeed, but without end? So, anyhow, it has always proved.<sup>1</sup>

Her own consciousness of the city and her reaction to being without, Rose Macaulay puts in these words:

Then, between sleeping and waking, there rose before me a vision of Trebizond; not Trebizond as I had seen it, but the Trebizond of the world's dreams, of my own dreams, shining towers and domes shimmering on the far horizon, yet close at hand, luminously enspelled in the most fantastic unreality, yet the only reality, a walled and gated city, magic and mystical, standing beyond my reach yet I had to be inside, an alien wanderer yet at home, held in the magical enchantment; and at its heart, at the secret heart of the city and the legend and the glory in which I was caught and held there was some pattern that I could not unravel, some hard core that I could not make my own, and, seeing the pattern and the hard core enshrined within the walls, I turned back from the city and stood outside it, expelled in mortal grief.<sup>2</sup>

This reality of fantastic beauty, heightened by insecurity, is as she sees it forever reeling but it stands — "so improbable as to be all but impossible, the walled kingdom of the infrangible God."

<sup>1</sup>Rose Macauley, *The Towers of Trebizond*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1957, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

But so speaks faith, the "all but impossible" condition. The "religionlessness" of modern man — even in the midst of retreats to forms of religion in which God is small and grace is cheap — is the situation of man in its total secularity. The style of life it imposes is one having no ultimate reference and no basic security. The time is one of no religion at all and the assumption that man's need is to be defined religiously, that he is to be dependent and resigned and to affirm blindly, is refused. Such is certainly the situation and the time in our academic communities and our various fields of study and teaching. We tend to limit the field of specialized interest and competence; we are devoted to skills and knowledge for the pursuit of limited and fairly immediate ends; a monograph rather than a *magnum opus* is what we tend either to prepare with reserved confidence or to contend with in our critiques; we affirm with some assurance a relativist position but are never so naive as to be tempted to absolutize it for we continue to practice self-criticism and keep thought many-sided. Religious institutions are removed as possible barriers between intellectual men; no sharply opposing world-views separate them. They are no longer part of communities which determine their being; they are challenged instead to become free, objective, and critical, able and willing to apply knowledge for technical ends but on guard against becoming instruments of that technology. This is the world "come of age." All the know-

## THE EDITOR'S PREFACE

ledge on earth gives no assurance that man was intended for such maturity, for the world, free in it, and responsible for it. Yet the very exercise of control expresses that responsibility for which human creatureliness was intended and reflects the manner in which man receives the world, to rule over responsibly. The very knowledge which is part of that process secularizes the world in relation to man. It is placed in an historical perspective. No longer is it the center of demonic powers or temptations.

But this too is the way eyes of faith see it. The special characteristic of man is his existence; he stands in a relationship, in a direction with reference to Another. Apart from this the threat is nothingness. This is true only for man, as the late Archbishop Temple pointed out when he said, "God minus man is God; man minus God is nothing." Wanting to escape nothing but to make of himself something, he finds God his competitor — he must rise to the height of God, but there the atmosphere is too thin and he dizzies and falls. It is in faith that he is given the capacity or restored to the possibility of affirming that he is the creature who is given the world to be responsible for it and free in it. But such faith is only that possibility; it is no more a necessity now than ever before and it was never more probable in some other era. It may be "improbable so as to be all but impossible." But it is still not wholly impossible. And this is true not because of the secularity of the modern age, for this is not a point of

view to be refuted but a condition of human existence to be understood; it is because of the nature of faith itself, for this is never a necessity but only a possibility.

Neither in the decision of faith nor in the acquisition of knowledge is a clear and congruent picture of the wholeness towards which man and the world are moving given. The wholeness resides in God alone; it is given only in hints which continue to cover it; the hiddenness of the structure of existence is disclosed and it remains hidden. Even the revelation in which Christian Faith centers is of the hidden God; not because of our sin but because He is God, He does not come out of hiding but discloses in disguise Who He is by re-hiding Himself. In all this the hint of ultimate meaning is given however primarily as a promise for the future which in faith is sensed in the present. This is the basis of what the German theologian, Friedrich Gogarten, in his book, *Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit*, describes as the proper secular attitude: "It knows the limits of its reason and yet does not give up the question which God has planted in the mind of man about the wholeness of all things. It lives in expectant relativity."<sup>3</sup> Over against this proper secularization, which is the modern condition Professor Scott finds so penetratingly depicted in Camus, Gogarten sets secularism, in which man either ceases to ask about the wholeness of things and thereby falls into nihilism,

<sup>3</sup>Stuttgart: Friedrich Vorwerk Verlag, 1953, p. 142.

or he pretends that he has already found an answer and therefore falls into a new form of ideological idolatry. On this basis all the scientific and humanistic development of modern times and the secularization which attends it is not only acceptable in God's sight; it is in its relativity, and yet in its striving for wholeness, under God's blessing, though it is also threatened and threatening with His judgment when it erects itself into a modern myth or ideology.

Thus we can understand why the late Dietrich Bonhoeffer could say that "now that it has come of age, the world is more godless and perhaps it is for that reason nearer to God than ever before." It is nearer the God not of simple or even sophisticated theism, in which he is made the object of our knowledge and experience, but the God of biblical faith, the hidden God, who is known by us only as we are the object of His knowing. God is God; man is man. This is the hidden structure, and to refuse, with Camus, a "spatialized God" who is made an object and whom to affirm is the "blasphemous monstrosity which the human reason can accept only by committing suicide," is akin to affirming the very structure which faith demands. Faith insists that we must live with the structure which is given, with the hiddenness of God who could not otherwise be responsible, the given creatureliness of man who is called to receive the world without having all the answers and to be responsible for it. As Bonhoeffer makes clear, the center

of the structure is Jesus Christ; He is the man for other men and he is the assurance of God for man as well as man before God. The Christian, set free in the human situation without final congruence, is called to share the life and problems of the world and to live in it in this joyful and tragic solidarity. He has no more knowledge of the ends toward which the world is moving, by God's grace, than without faith; but he has been set within a community of persons in which he already finds himself in a new existence.

Thus there is a basis for the freedom of the academic man, even the freedom to be all the things that the modern intellectual tends toward being. The Christian scholar is called upon not to square everything with theological assertions, not to fit his conclusions about the phenomenal world to prescribed forms of dogma, not to expose the subject only as far as it is favorable to religious views, not to integrate the student and deliver him to some prearranged wholeness, and not to vindicate the Church or guarantee it exemption from any harsh judgments. In all these things faith is always for our freedom in the world — freedom for relative judgments, for objective inquiry, for honest intellectual endeavor, for self-offering in the cause of truth, even for risking our own faith daily in its give-and-take relations within the college or university. Indeed this is not only our freedom. It is the Christian's responsibility, as a scholar and as a Christian, to maintain the secular nature of the world in its relative,

## THE EDITOR'S PREFACE

problem-solving, and neighbor-centered orientation. This is because of his faith which does not give nor does it cause man to rebel when he has not been given ultimate and total explanation; his faith rather causes him to live in expectancy of God's act, knowing it must be God's act by which the law of our being is finally fulfilled. The Christian should therefore be pre-eminently qualified to stand alongside the neighbor, in whom Camus' longings and modest optimisms move even as they move within himself; and he does not stand there as one ready to pounce upon the first opening there may be for "witness" but as one who by his compassion, service, and listening — indeed by his whole manner of life — affirms "the common fate of human

solidarity." This is already the manner of life which constitutes an evangelism of proven worth by what Christ did and does. Faith is not an escape; but neither is it cheating. It is the possibility given us to serve and think in the relative confidence that we are intended to live in the light of structures, as creatures in a world we are called to receive as our stewardship, in the service of God who grants us the freedom of the world, and with the capacity to hold truth as if held by Truth itself. And it is finally by that possibility which is faith, not by the certainties of our knowledge or the rightness of our doings, that the provisional congruence of justification is given us. Thanks be to God!

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## Communications

### TO THE EDITOR:

I am grateful for the kindness with which my contribution was received by John Smith and Will Herberg.<sup>1</sup> I was in sympathetic hands.

I agree with Dr. Smith that there is need for a "dominant value" and for acknowledgment of a transcending unity of the self. He is further astutely right in saying that my use of the word "naturalistic" is theologically loaded and already injects a metaphysical issue. I did not speak my full piece in this article because frankly I was hoping to carry my audience as far as possible on the non-super-natural, non-"revelational" side.

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<sup>1</sup>This letter is prompted by the comments of Dr. John E. Smith and Professor Will Herberg published with Dr. Ordway Tead's article, "Value Emphasis in College Teaching," *The Christian Scholar*, June 1959.

Let me now try, all too briefly, to explain where I stand on this score, hoping that it will really strengthen the total impact of my theme and also help to confront Mr. Herberg's point about a revival of faith being "the doing of God" — a view I do not understand or if I do, I do not see why he opposes God to the "planned achievement of man" — which in its naturalism can certainly become transcendent and divine and partake of a co-working with God's nature.

I call my present outlook *naturalistic theism*; that is, the world of nature — material, human, cosmic — is the projection or concretion or reality or ground of God. God works through natural forces which are orderly, lawful, and when correctly grasped are predictive and capable of giving control over certain phenomena to men.

On the other hand to avoid what I suppose would be a pantheistic position, I share the view of those who contend that in some paradoxical way God is still being created. He at once Is and Is Becoming. And the becoming is shared in and is deliberated upon the labors of men who have, so to say, been charged with carrying on the work of creativity in an incomplete world where obedience to the mandate to help toward completion is absolute.

I feel the presumption of my discussion of this point by me at all. My claim to speak is only that of a non-professional inquirer who has long sought to get at what is for me pure religion and undefiled in its educational relationships. But since I am embarked upon it I must go further and say that it seems to me that all the greatest truths require the statement of their opposites in order to have a deeper vision of the truth. Professor Sheldon of Yale in his *God and Polarity* (Yale University Press, 1954) illuminates this general position. Hence when I propose a naturalistic theism, it is nature, nature's God, God the lawgiver including the Law of Love, the growing body of natural law in all its possible richness of truth, which together seem to me to be aspects of what partakes of and shares in the Divine Nature. And I am not disturbed if there seem to be logical inconsistencies, if there are dialectical truths which in complementing each other enrich a total super-rational view of a matter which is presumably transcending any but the most partial human comprehension.

What kind of God does this leave us with? It leaves me with the kind of God which within my limits of finite expression I find congenial to my encounter with the All-Encompassing and the Infinite. There is no logical reason which we have to heed which says that God cannot be a Loving Father to some, the Divine Law, the Great Mathematician, the Inner Light, the Final Judge, or something else to others, or a combination of all!

I find this helpful statement in *Myth and Christianity* by Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann (New York: Noonday Press, 1958, p. 89):

The idea of God, taken seriously, excludes definite determinations, and requires that we go beyond all languages, but only after having passed



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through them. In the moment that is eternity, we surmount them, having attained the incommunicable imageless. I presume that the minister active in the living faith will not forget any of the levels, will keep them all in a state of proper indeterminateness, and attach them to the single uncommunicable point: the infinite.

And it should be added that a natural law seems to me to be properly interpreted as a law not of absolute cause and effect but of formative, purposive, emergent, creative requirements that envisage an open-ended world.

I confess to a strong sense on occasion of what has been called the "presence of God." But I see no compulsion to verbalize the ineffable through efforts at definition. And furthermore I feel strongly that "the practice of the Presence of God" (Brother Lawrence's phrase, I believe) can be the veriest cant unless it is approached not only with courage but with all possible knowledge of how nature, man, and cosmos operate as this has been disclosed to us through scientific inquiry. Incidentally this is my reason for stressing a value emphasis in scientific education. We cannot obey or fulfill the natural law without knowledge which requires all the mental capacity we can mobilize. Christian education ideally would be that which, in the constant awareness that it is God's world into which we have been thrust, would seek to summon man's instruments of natural inquiry and experiment and his capacities of spiritual insight and of moral courage, toward the bettering of the human situation in divinely intended ways.

In conclusion, are we talking about what Mr. Herberg calls a "reintroduction of values"; rather is not my theme the transvaluation of values in the light of an acceptance of natural law as revealer of the right, the righteous, the good, and the divine?

The secularization of our culture is the failure to see and to judge the processes of living in the light of the divine imperative of our having to conform to the nature of man and of the material world. We need divine standards humanly invoked.

Will this be an achievement of God or of man — or of a reciprocal effort in God's natural world?

ORDWAY TEAD  
*Harper & Brothers*  
*New York, N.Y.*

#### TO THE EDITOR:

Jacques Ellul's article in the June 1959 issue ("Concerning the Christian Attitude toward Law") contains so much that is helpful to me and my understanding of this problem that I hesitate to voice even this partial dissent. I cannot remain silent, however, for the extreme individualism expressed in the article,

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its hostility to institutions, seems dangerously close to the idolatrous individualism of the enlightenment and nineteenth century liberalism.

He says, "It is the Christian better than anyone else who ought to know the unique value of each man because Jesus Christ died for each of us." The central statement that the Christian should know the unique value of every person is, I believe, unimpeachable; but its expression and proof ("because Jesus Christ died for each of us") is not Biblical. Christ died for us, he redeems us — me also — but only in and with others and as I participate in the oneness which all men have in him. The subjectivism of the author's view is more clearly stated thusly: "It is because man is justified in Jesus Christ and by Him that his desire for justice does not fall into nothingness forever but is accomplished: for this desire is always that of My justification in the last analysis, and here in the death of Jesus Christ I am proclaimed justified." For this reason he can say that law "does not come from God; it is purposefully established by man," and state the conclusion, "Nothing can be 'Christian' except man. Things, ideas, or institutions cannot be 'Christian' because it is for men that Jesus Christ died."

Here his argument is with St. Paul who, in Romans 8:19-23, says, "For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

The demonic distortion of corporate spirits (principalities and powers) in Nazism, Soviet communism, nationalism, colonialism, capitalism, and in smaller and less powerful institutions and ideologies need not blind us to the creative possibilities in social life and thought; and they are not unparalleled by similar demonic distortions within the hearts and minds of individual men. In fact the most demonic of these movements are almost directly connected with, perhaps even products of, the suspicions of established institutions and traditional knowledge fostered by the enlightenment two centuries ago. It is not until men recognize that these also are from God, who creates, redeems, and sustains them as he does individual men, that they can be restored to their rightful and appropriate place as the broken and sinful corporate expressions of the hopes, desires, and thoughts of broken and sinful men.

THOMAS P. GOVAN  
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# The Modest Optimism of Albert Camus

NATHAN A. SCOTT, JR.

There is perhaps no other living European writer who exerts so great a pressure on the imagination and conscience of his generation as does Albert Camus. And his role in contemporary cultural life is one that puts us in mind of how unstable have been the lines of demarcation in our time between literature and philosophy. This is undoubtedly in part a result of the fact that philosophy itself has been so intimidated by science that it has consented to be deprived of first one and then another of its fields of inquiry, so that, at the last, there is little else left for it to do but to practice the disciplines of logical analysis. And thus for instruction in the unique facts and experiences of human personality the men of our age have turned to poets and novelists or to philosophers like Heidegger and Jaspers and Marcel who have been converting philosophy itself into a kind of metaphysical poetry or drama. But, however we choose to account for this tendency today of literary and philosophical categories to coalesce, it must be granted that in a very deep and integral sense the great literature of our period has been by way of becoming "an instrument of metaphysical consciousness."<sup>1</sup> The art of such writers for example as Pirandello and Gide and Malraux is of enormous technical interest, and their work cannot be properly appropriated if this dimension is ignored. But, when we read *Les Faux Monnayeurs*, it is not the experimentalist in "point of view" but it is Gide in his role as theorist of the gratuitous act who interests us most deeply; in the theatre of Pirandello what we are perplexed and engaged by most profoundly is not the sheer pyrotechnics of his eccentric dramaturgy but the bitter existential comedy, say, of *Right You Are*; and in a novel like *L'Espoir* the thing that we feel to be of high significance is not Malraux's adaptation of the techniques of cinematic *montage* but his tragic humanism, his vision of fraternity, and his *mystique* of action. Indeed it has been more often true than not that the major writers of this century — such figures as Kafka and Lawrence and Mann and Eliot and Auden — have in some deep sense been, as the French say, *directeurs de conscience*, and it is the gravity and the brilliance with which Camus continues this tradition into the present time that in large part accounts for the great prestige that his name has among us today. The literature that he is producing is a literature drenched in ideas, and I suspect he makes so

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<sup>1</sup>Gaëtan Picon, *André Malraux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 64.

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great an impress upon us in his plays and novels because theirs is a rhetoric that is vibrant with the central themes of the modern consciousness.

Camus' vision is in other words an emphatically modern vision: in him we behold the style of the age, and this is so because his fundamental assumption is that the ultimate exigency which man faces in our time is an exigency arising out of a great abdication, a terrible collapse, a tragic death, in the City of God Himself. What he gives a home to in his work is the characteristically modern sense that the only anchorage for the human enterprise therefore lies somewhere within itself and that any principles of meaning by which man's universe is to be ordered he must himself contrive out of the inventiveness of his own untrammelled creativity. He apprehends the human voyager as utterly alone and without anything to rely upon except the compass of his own mind and heart. Man has no one to look to but himself for the bearing of his own weight, and there is no information agency for the human tourist: he must give himself his own directions: it is up to him and to him alone to decide where he shall go. This is the sense of the human condition that forms the core of the drastically truncated Pascalianism that has been encountered in Camus' writing ever since the appearance of his early essays in the late 'thirties.

In one of the letters collected by Eberhard Bethge into the volume *Letters and Papers from Prison*, the distinguished young German theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis in the spring of 1945, recognized that "We are proceeding towards a time of no religion at all: men as they are now simply cannot be religious any more."<sup>2</sup> And there is no other writer of the present time who gives us a deeper insight into what the new "religionlessness" entails than does Albert Camus. To contemplate the movement of his thought is to discern anew the causes of the decline of what Bonhoeffer called "the religious premise," and it is also to discern what is vital and promising in the "religionlessness" of our day and the questions that it poses to those who by Christ are "called forth" into the risks and dangers of the world.

One of Camus' most sensitive American critics, R. W. B. Lewis, in discussing his "quarrel with God," has expressed regret that it should be marked by such "inaccurate firing."<sup>3</sup> And Mr. Lewis means that in part Camus' refusal of Christian theism is a refusal of a doctrine of divine transcendence on whose standing or falling the integrity of the Christian faith is not at all really dependent. But, though this is so, it cannot be gainsaid that the apologetics which modern intellectuals have encountered and known about has very often been an apologetics that has spoken about God in the manner of a *terra incognita*, as though He were

<sup>2</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, edited by Eberhard Bethge and trans. by Reginald H. Fuller (London: S C M Press, 1953), p. 122.

<sup>3</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, *The Picaresque Saint: Representative Figures in Contemporary Fiction* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott Co., 1959), p. 78.

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a being or person beside or above other beings or persons, and one whose "existence" was a matter of theoretical knowledge. The kind of spatialization of the divine that is implicit in traditional supernaturalist theism is of course profoundly at odds with the deepest meanings of biblical faith, and what we have also to grant is that it is a frigid and blasphemous monstrosity which the human reason can accept only by committing suicide. This is a God who, since He is a being amongst others, "is bound to the subject-object structure of reality . . . [and is therefore] an object for us as subjects. At the same time we are objects for him as a subject. . . . For God as a subject makes me into an object which is nothing more than an object. He deprives me of my subjectivity because he is all-powerful and all-knowing, [appearing] . . . as the invincible tyrant, the being in contrast with whom all other beings are without freedom and subjectivity. . . . This is the God Nietzsche said had to be killed because nobody can tolerate being made into a mere object of absolute knowledge and absolute control."<sup>4</sup> And this is the God whom Camus has known, and the refusal of whom is at the root of the melancholy that lies just beneath the surface of even his most positive affirmations.

Now, having rejected the spurious consolations of a spurious supernaturalism and not having envisaged the possibility of a "God above the God of theism,"<sup>5</sup> the question to which Camus addressed himself in his first books was the question as to the basis on which human life is to be sustained against the immense indifference of the world. Early in his book of 1942, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he tells us that "in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land." And it was the full implication of this terribly absurd forlornness of man's estate that he proposed to clarify.

In *The Myth of Sisyphus* man's exiled condition is called "absurd" because it is so completely alien to the mind's deepest desires. For the essential impulse of the human spirit is to behold the world as its real home, is to be assured of some basic congruence between its aspirations for intelligibility and the fundamental constitution of reality. But in this world everything is given and nothing is explained: the mind's hunger for coherence is countered by the irremediable incoherence of existence: "all the knowledge on earth will give me nothing to assure me that this world is mine." And though in imagination we touch the fringes of the eternal, we are but the feeblest reeds in nature, engulfed within the infinite opacity of the world. Indeed the ultimate outrage is the certainty that we will die, and "the cruel mathematics that command our condition" involve us in a tragic calculus that seems in the end to make for an absolute nullification of every conceivable value. Hence the opening sentence of *The Myth* which is one

<sup>4</sup>Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 185.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 186-190.

of the most famous sentences in recent literature: "There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide."

The bitter despair that is promised by this opening sentence turns out however not at all to be a part of the predominant stress of the book. It is indeed Camus' whole purpose in *The Myth* to demonstrate that suicide can be no real solution to the problem of the Absurd. For, if the Absurd is born out of the confrontation between the human demand for clarity and justice and "the unreasonable silence of the world," it cannot be resolved by destroying one term in the polarity which gives rise to the problem. "If I attempt to solve a problem, at least I must not by that very solution conjure away one of the terms of the problem": this would be to annul it, not really to solve it. And, what is more, it would be for man to consent to his own defeat, for, in the desperate leap out of the Absurd into the spurious relief of nothingness, he repudiates himself: he consents to his humiliation, himself becomes the agent of it and, in thus succumbing to his impotence effectively, abdicates his humanity.

So then, if the ultimate quandary of our existence cannot be resolved by fleeing from existence, our choice must therefore be *for* existence and for the lucidity by which alone we can live in the Absurd with dignity and honor. And not only are we forbidden "the leap" out of the Absurd that is represented by self-inflicted annihilation: Camus also castigates any and all other attempts to "leap" out of the human condition and most especially those that involve an effort to "transcend" the human realm by "[deifying] what crushes [us] and [finding] reason to hope in what impoverishes [us]." Jaspers for example, says Camus, finds "nothing in experience but the confession of his own impotence and no occasion to infer any satisfactory principle. Yet without justification . . . he suddenly asserts all at once the transcendent . . . and the superhuman significance of life. . . . Thus the absurd becomes god . . . and that inability to understand becomes the existence that illuminates everything." This is a kind of cheating that he finds not only in Jaspers but in many other modern thinkers — in Kierkegaard, in Shestov, in the religious existentialists generally; and a similar irrationalism he discerns in Husserl and Scheler and the phenomenologists. Here is a family of thinkers who begin with "a philosophy of the non-significance of the world," who see with great acuteness "that divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints." Yet they prove the Absurd only to suppress it and to retreat from what they have brought to light. They are bent on escaping the irremediable antinomies of the human condition: they are unwilling to endure the deserts of the Absurd: so, "starting from a philosophy of the world's lack of meaning, [they end] up by finding a meaning and a depth in it." The Absurd is used as a springboard to eternity, and this is a piece of sleight whose negation of human reason involves nothing less than "philosophical suicide."

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There is then no humanly valid way, Camus believes, of moving beyond the Absurd, of moving beyond the human. So what we must learn to do is to live with lucidity and without hope, nourished only by "the wine of the absurd and the bread of indifference." "Living," he says, "is keeping the absurd alive. Keeping it alive is, above all, contemplating it." And this is what the absurd man consents to do: he is a man without nostalgia who consents to live *in* the Absurd, not acquiescently but defiantly, indifferent to the future, refusing all "supernatural consolation" and sustained only by his cold resolve not to relax the posture of rebellion.

Now this ethic of indifference entails a kind of stern hedonism, for, if "this life has no other aspect than that of the absurd . . . then I must say that what counts is not the best living but the most living" — which is to say that the notion of quantity will be of greater ethical significance than the notion of quality. And thus it is that, for Camus, Don Juan is one of the great "heroes of the absurd," for he goes from woman to woman not because he is guided by Ecclesiastes but because, having no hope of another life, he finds it logical to insist on satiety.

The actor too is for Camus a kind of archetypal example of the absurd man, for as the practitioner of an art of simulation, of appearance, he incarnates the truth that the various fictitious lives he impersonates on the stage are no more real, have no greater significance, than his own. So in a way his very role as actor emblemizes the absurdity of the general human condition.

Then in the conqueror and the artist Camus also finds absurdism crucially instanced — in the conqueror because, in undertaking to carry out some large program in the historical order, he behaves "as if" the one really useful action were possible, namely "that of remaking man and the earth"; and in the artist because, though knowing the work of art to be only an impotent artifact, he yet persists in his task, thus exemplifying a type of revolt against the human fate.

And all these various models of absurdism find their most concentrated image for Camus in the mythical Sisyphus who, for having attempted to conquer Death itself, is punished in Hades by being compelled eternally but unsuccessfully to push a great rock to the top of a hill. Here, Camus feels, we have the full, grand human thing itself — impotence yet rebellion, overwhelming odds yet resolute endurance, defeat yet victory. He "teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. . . . One must imagine Sisyphus happy."

Now there is an element of glamorous titanism in all these figures — in Don Juan and the conqueror, in the artist and in the mythical Sisyphus. But Camus cautions us against mistaking the ethic of the Absurd as an aristocratic ethic appropriate only to an élite. He tells us quite plainly that it is lucidity alone that matters and that in this an obscure post office clerk can be the equal of a conqueror. And we are reminded of this cautionary word when we turn to his novel *The Stranger*, which appeared along with *The Myth* in 1942, though it had



been completed a few months before the completion of the essay. Here in the plot and the images of a work of prose fiction, we are made to experience the sensation of the Absurd with a degree of immediacy that is, I think, at no point equally realized in *The Myth*; and in Meursault, the little clerk in an Algerian shipping firm, we have one of Camus' purest renderings of the absurd man.

The narrative line of the novel is uncluttered by any difficult complications. Meursault receives word of his mother's death in the home for the aged where she has recently resided. So he requests a brief leave from his business firm and goes to the country district in which the home is located for the funeral. He is unmoved by the occasion and feels nothing other than the mild stupor induced by the summer heat. He returns to Algiers on a Friday evening and, the next morning, goes down to the beach for a swim. There he meets Marie who used to be a typist in his office. After swimming together, they go to a Fernandel movie — then back to Meursault's room and bed and the beginning of a liaison. In the course of the summer, after an acquaintance, Raymond, has beaten up his mistress, Meursault consents to testify in his behalf before the police. And one weekend, while he and Raymond are visiting Raymond's friends, the Massons, at their summer cottage, they encounter this girl's Arab kinsmen on the beach. In a scuffle that ensues Raymond is knifed by one of them. And later, on the afternoon of the same day, Meursault returns to the beach alone, where he finds one of the Arabs lying in the shade. He sees the Arab draw his knife: the light of the blazing sun glints on the steel, and, says Meursault, "I felt as if a long, thin blade transfixed my forehead. . . . I was conscious only of the cymbals of the sun clashing on my skull. . . . Then everything began to reel before my eyes. . . ." And at this moment he reaches into his pocket for the revolver which he had taken from Raymond earlier in the day. "Every nerve in my body was a steel spring, and my grip closed on the revolver. . . . I fired four more shots into the inert body. . . . And each successive shot was another loud, fateful rap on the door of my undoing."

The second part of the book is devoted to the interrogation and the trial. And throughout the long proceedings Meursault displays the same indifference that he had shown toward his mother's death. Indeed it is his behavior on that earlier occasion by which those presiding over his trial seem chiefly to be outraged, and one feels that he goes to the guillotine not so much for having killed the Arab as for not having wept at his mother's funeral.

Then at the last he is visited in his cell by the prison chaplain who comes to discuss the ultimate realities of judgment and redemption and to offer the comfort of the Christian faith. And it is in this moment that Meursault wins access to a new lucidity which propels him out of his habitual indifference into a violent rejection of the thin ethereality that he believes the chaplain's piety to entail. As he faces the ultimate emergency of his own ordained death, the wan spiritualism of

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the chaplain's religion, in its conventional otherworldliness and sterile asceticism, strikes him — to use a phrase of D. H. Lawrence — as really "doing dirt on life." So, as he says:

I started yelling at the top of my voice. I hurled insults at him, I told him not to waste his rotten prayers on me. . . . He seemed so cocksure, you see. And yet none of his certainties was worth one strand of a woman's hair. Living as he did, like a corpse, he couldn't even be sure of being alive. . . . Actually, I was sure of myself, sure about everything, far surer than he; sure of my present life and of the death that was coming. That, no doubt, was all I had; but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into — just as it had got its teeth into me.

And it is in the light of this new clarity that he suddenly discerns what is really ultimate in his existence, that

From the dark horizon of my future a sort of slow, persistent breeze had been blowing toward me, all my life long, from the years that were to come. And on its way that breeze had leveled out all the ideas that people tried to foist on me in the equally unreal years I then was living through. What difference could they make to me, the deaths of others, or a mother's love, or his God; or the way a man decides to live, the fate he thinks he chooses, since one and the same fate was bound to "choose" not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people who, like him, called themselves my brothers. . . . All alike would be condemned to die one day. . . .

In this final moment Meursault consciously perceives the utter futility of any kind of ultimate hope, it is as if a cloud had lifted: as he abandons himself to "the benign indifference of the universe," he suddenly realizes that his has indeed been a happy life and that he is even happy still. "It was as if," he says, "that great rush of anger had washed me clean. . . ." There is, to be sure, nothing other than this earthly existence, but the joys of this life, he now realizes, he has savored even more deeply than he has known. He recalls the eternal Algerian summer, the sound of the rippling water at his feet down at the beach, the smooth feel of the water on his body as he struck out, the "sun-gold" of Marie's face — and he knows then that the glory of the world is its own justification. So like Sisyphus he is sustained by "the wine of the absurd and the bread of indifference," and he faces his last hour with the serenity of one who has moved forward, if not towards some brave new world, at least towards a calm acceptance of the present dispensation. And his final mood is very nearly the ecstasy of a pantheistic mysticism.

Now it is just this final transfiguration that fails to prove itself, either in terms of the logic of Camus' thought or in terms of the dramatic logic of the novel.

What he succeeds in conveying to us — and with a more pungent vividness than any novelist since Kafka has achieved — is the very flavor and sensation that life takes on when (paraphrasing Yeats's famous line) things have fallen apart, when the center no longer holds, and "mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." In the universe that is inhabited by this obscure Algerian clerk all meaning has been displaced by the absurd equivalence into which all possible choices and actions have been collapsed by the death of God and "the cruel mathematics that command our condition." As Jean-Paul Sartre remarked in his fine review of the book in 1943, one is made uneasy by the very first paragraph. Meursault tells us that

Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure. The telegram from the Home says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday.

And we are made uneasy because we sense that we have suddenly entered a place in which the successiveness of time has somehow been cancelled out or broken up: "Mother died today. . . it could have been yesterday." And it could have been the day before yesterday: the lifeless monotone of the speaker intimates that the issue is of no consequence to him. Or again when Marie asks him one evening if he'll marry her, he says:

I said I didn't mind; if she was keen on it, we'd get married.

Then she asked me again if I loved her. I replied, much as before, that her question meant nothing or next to nothing — but I supposed I didn't.

"If that's how you feel," she said, "why marry me?" I explained that it had no importance really, but, if it would give her pleasure, we could get married right away.

And neither issue matters — neither the day on which his mother died nor whether or not he marries Marie — because, as he reasons at the end of the narrative, the "slow, persistent breeze" that blows in upon him from "the dark horizon of [his] future" levels out all distinctions and thus keeps any one action or experience from carrying more significance than others. He knows in other words — long before the murder, the trial, and his condemnation — that he is going to die. So when Raymond offers him friendship, when Marie offers him her love, when his employer offers him advancement, when a priest offers him the consolations of faith, he hunches his shoulders and says in effect, "It's all the same to me: makes no difference much: let it be as you will." And it is the unshakeable taciturnity with which he faces the silence of the world that makes him a "stranger," an "outsider": he will not give his suffrage to the illusions of those who cannot bear the cold, bitter stone of truth. And the scandal that he therefore becomes is precisely what is at issue during his trial in the abuse that is heaped upon him for



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his failure to weep at his mother's funeral: his refusal of the conventional emotions appears to the Algerian populace to be a kind of obscenity.

Now all this is conveyed with an uncanny shrewdness of dramatic gesture. The fragmentation and incoherence which are the basic ontological facts in Meursault's experience of life are present not simply in the assertions of his own broken rhetoric, but they are also present in the whole style and design of the novel. Recalling Francis Fergusson's definition of the tragic rhythm as a movement from *purpose* to *passion* to *perception*,<sup>6</sup> R. W. B. Lewis has very acutely observed that in the case of *The Stranger* the movement is from a "carefully realized purposelessness through a prolonged absence of passion to the perception that makes them both right and appropriate. It is, in short, the absurd mimesis of the tragic."<sup>7</sup> And not only is the novel's dramatic structure emblematic of Camus' theme, but we encounter the abyss of nothingness in the very structure of his syntax. He wants to tell us that the dark breeze blowing in upon us from the future means that we really have no future at all, that all we have is the tenuity of the present instant. And this is perhaps most powerfully intimated in the telegraphic laconicism of his syntax. As Sartre observed in his brilliant essay on the novel,

The world is destroyed and reborn from sentence to sentence. When the word makes its appearance it is a creation *ex nihilo*. The sentences . . . are islands. We bounce from sentence to sentence, from void to void. . . . The sentences are not . . . arranged in relation to each other; they are simply juxtaposed. . . . [They have] neither ramifications nor extensions nor internal structure. . . . [They are all] equal to each other, just as all the absurd man's experiences are equal. Each one sets up for itself and sweeps the others into the void.<sup>8</sup>

We are in other words in a mute and abandoned universe: in Meursault we have an example of man living in the Absurd: this is, as the late Rachel Bepaloff said ten years ago in her *Esprit* article, "the world of the condemned man,"<sup>9</sup> the world that is portrayed with such poignant eloquence in the early sections of *The Myth of Sisyphus*. But then in the polemic against Kierkegaard and Shestov and Jaspers and in many other sections of that book it is Camus' main purpose to invalidate all attempts to "leap" from absurdity into any kind of faith-ful affirmation. Yet this would appear to be precisely what is entailed in Meursault's final reconciliation. For he somehow moves from the sullen hopelessness and indiffer-

<sup>6</sup>Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theater* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), Chapter I.

<sup>7</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

<sup>8</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, "Camus' *The Outsider*," *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. by Annette Michelson (London: Rider and Co., 1955), pp. 38-40.

<sup>9</sup>Rachel Bepaloff, "Le Monde du condamné à mort," *Esprit*, No. 163, January 1950.

ence in whose grip he is throughout most of the novel to the benign affirmativeness of his final mood, and we find it difficult to understand what it is that explains and accounts for the passage. The passionate infatuation with life, the felicity, the sense of blessedness even, that Meursault somehow wrests out of the last hours — this is all so unprepared for in everything that has gone before: so it not only lacks dramatic cogency and credibility, but it seems also really to be unsupported by what were the basic premises of Camus' thought in the early 'forties. But the forlorn, dispirited *isolato* who seeks with his own indifference to match the indifference of the world is a memorable figure, and his main story is one of the great philosophical myths in the literature of this century.

Two years after the publication in 1942 of *The Stranger* and *The Myth of Sisyphus* there appeared the two major plays of Camus' early period, *Cross-Purposes* and *Caligula*. These are works that in a way bring to a close the phase of his career in which, following the first books of the late 'thirties (*L'Envers et l'Endroit*, 1937; *Noces*, 1939), he was attempting to explore the full depths of modern nihilism. And of the two it is in the somber, operatic brilliance of *Caligula* that we get the most concentrated résumé of the early preoccupation with *l'absurde*.

The young Caligula (who at the age of 25 became Emperor of Rome and whose brief, tempestuous reign is chronicled in Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars*) is overborne with grief following the death of his sister, Drusilla, with whom he had lived incestuously. His emotions however are not merely those of grief but of rage and anger and indignation. For Drusilla's death, as he tells his friend Helicon, is but a symbol of the fact that "Men die and . . . are not happy." His loss in other words precipitates him into *l'absurde*, discloses how barren the world is of meaning. And, perceiving how shallow is the general understanding of this truth, he becomes a kind of missionary in behalf of absurdism, deciding that the service he shall render Rome will be that of making known the metaphysical anarchy that dominates existence: he will wear "the foolish, unintelligible face of a professional god." So he arranges a drama that is intended to be a terrifying simulacrum of the unconscionable arbitrariness of fate itself. His method is the method of terror: he confiscates the property of both the rich and the poor; he murders the children and the parents of his friends; he humiliates and tortures distinguished patricians; he awards prizes to the citizens making the largest number of visits to the Roman brothels; he mercilessly decrees executions; he arbitrarily curtails food supplies for the populace; and finally his malevolence reaches such insane proportions till it becomes clear that no one is safe.

The lesson that this frenzied pedagogue wants to teach is that the ultimate truth about the world is that it has no truth, and he proceeds to do this by creating a delirious kingdom of violence "where the impossible is king." He organizes a campaign against creation partly in order to give men access to the real facts of their condition in this world and partly as an act of revenge against

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a remote and criminal deity. So his demonic ardor is the passion of one who has undertaken an asceticism of absolute rebellion, and this furious adventure in sabotage is terminated only by his assassination.

The assassination is led by Caligula's friend Cherea who becomes, in the dialectic of the drama, his major opponent. He chooses to join forces with the assassins "to combat a big idea . . . whose triumph would mean the end of everything." He acknowledges that Caligula's philosophy is "logical from start to finish," but the trouble with it, as he says, is that it converts itself into corpses — and, though it cannot be refuted, it must be opposed. He is a man in whom hope is as dead as it is in Caligula, but he silences all in his heart that is akin to the Emperor; for he is on the side of life, and he knows that Caligula is a prince of the powers of darkness who would legitimize murder. He knows human existence to be as precarious and as threatened as Caligula has found it to be, but he foregoes the Emperor's Luciferian dandyism, choosing instead to dedicate his own strength to fortifying the reign of man. And, given the insufferable anarchy into which Rome has been thrown, this means the Emperor's assassination. Yet Caligula speaks the last words: as the assassins fling themselves upon him with their daggers, he gasps out the cry: "I'm still alive!" And thus like Melville's Ahab he spits his last breath back at the Absurd in frenetic and arrogant defiance.

Now it is in these early works — in *The Stranger*, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in the plays *Cross-Purposes* and *Caligula* — that we get what Rudolf Bultmann would call Camus' "sense of existence," his sense of what man is up against in this world. And the crux of it, as I have been suggesting, is the idea of the world's absurdity. The definition of that in relation to which the human task is to be carried on does not in other words posit any specific hindrance or obstruction: rather it is simply the calloused "thickness and strangeness of the world" that constitutes our irremediable burden. *L'absurde* grows out of the fact that life is filled with meanings that are incomprehensible to man, that existence intransigently resists man's demand for rational coherence, and that man everywhere beholds the evidence of the fragility of his life. God is dead, and the sense of *angoisse*, of *l'absurde*, grows out of the absolute uncertainty as to whether or not there is any effective ontological warrant for the continuance of the human enterprise. The issue is the anxiety of emptiness, of meaninglessness; and the scene that is explored in Camus' early writings is the Abyss of *Nada* in whose servitude human life is caught at the end of the modern period — a world in which Nothing is at the center, the world of Hardy and Conrad, of Hemingway and Malraux and Sartre.

But, having defined what is centrally problematic in modern experience, Camus since the mid-'forties has been attempting to conceive a way of surviving and a stratagem of resistance. Hawthorne once remarked of his friend Melville that "He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief." And something like

this also comes near being true of this contemporary Frenchman, at least in the extent to which, as he says in the Preface to the American edition of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in all of his work since the 'forties he has been attempting to find "the means to proceed beyond nihilism." Like Cherea in *Caligula* he believes that it is man's fate to live without hope and without Grace: yet no thinker of our time has been more alert to the futility of the ethics that modern nihilism has produced. Indeed Camus' most cutting strictures are reserved for those metaphysical rebels of the last hundred and fifty years who like Ivan Karamazov have concluded that, since God is dead, then "everything is permitted." For to legitimize murder is to have allowed the Absurd to intimidate us into unfaithfulness to humanity.

It is precisely Camus' most fundamental aim however to find a way of affirming the human order. He wants neither the easy infinities of conventional religion nor the Manichaean angelism of the modern nihilist, but rather he is looking for "a form of order that orders indeed, but leaves reality, every iota of yours and mine, intact — multitudinous, different and free, but together at last."<sup>10</sup> And it is this concern that unifies his work of the last fifteen years,<sup>11</sup> giving *The Plague* and *The Rebel* a privileged status amongst his writings of this period, since it is in these books that we get the most concentrated expression of his basic interest. Here like Ignazio Silone he is asking the question as to what action will redeem the time and re-establish the image of man: the focus in other words has shifted from an analysis of the Absurd to an analysis of how the world's disorder may be resisted and the life of the human creature may be rectified and renewed.

The French Roman Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel tells us that ours is today a world in which "the preposition 'with' . . . seems more and more to be losing its meaning."<sup>12</sup> But one feels that on the contrary the main lesson of *The Plague* is just that our solidarity with one another is the thing that we cannot possibly not know amidst "this meadow of calamity, / This uncongenial place, this human life. . . ."<sup>13</sup> "In an absurd world," says Camus, "the rebel still has one certainty. It is the solidarity of men in the same adventure, the fact that both he and the grocer are baffled."<sup>14</sup> And it is our involvement as men in a common fate that constitutes the principal fact for Camus in his book of 1947.

<sup>10</sup>William F. Lynch, S.J., "Theology and the Imagination," *Thought*, Vol. XXX, No. 116 (Spring 1955), p. 34.

<sup>11</sup>The exception is the collection of stories that forms his latest book, *Exile and the Kingdom*, in which the preoccupation with the themes of exile and alienation to some extent reaches back to the stress of the earlier books.

<sup>12</sup>Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1950), Vol. I, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup>Matthew Arnold, "Empedocles on Etna," Act II, *Poetical Works of Matthew Arnold* (London: Macmillan, 1901), p. 472.

<sup>14</sup>Albert Camus, "La Remarque sur la Révolte," in the collection, *Existence* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 18.

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The setting of *The Plague* is the Algerian coast town of Oran whose inhabitants begin to notice on a certain day an increasing number of rats in their dwelling places. In a short time rats are tumbling out of every hole and cranny in the town and dying by the thousands in the streets. Then the inhabitants themselves begin to die of a mysterious fever, and it soon becomes evident to the local physicians that all the horrible symptoms spell bubonic plague. So, after weeks of equivocation on the part of the authorities, it is apparent that there is no other course but to employ the most rigorous prophylactic measures and to place the town in quarantine. It is then separated from the rest of the world, and with the closing of gates its people are shut in upon the long ordeal of exile and suffering with which they have to live throughout almost an entire year.

In his epigraph from Defoe Camus tells us that "It is as reasonable to represent one kind of imprisonment by another, as it is to represent anything that really exists by that which exists not." And the allegorical nature of the fable is emphasized by the dull, provincial scene and by the dispassionate, matter-of-fact objectivity of tone from which Camus never varies in the chronicling of the narrative. When the book appeared in 1947, it was at first supposed, particularly by Camus' French readers, to be a rendering of the experience of the German Occupation. But so narrow a constriction of its meaning is, I suspect, possible only if the novel is read without regard for the major consistencies of Camus' thought. For once it is approached under this more spacious perspective, we cannot fail to discern that the plague itself is really but an emblem of everything that twists and betrays and otherwise outrages the human spirit in "this uncongenial place." The dilatoriness of the epidemic's progress is the massive inertia of the world, and its murderous malevolence is the disastrous irrationality of the Absurd itself.

In the gallery of characters whom Camus creates to carry his meaning, we are presented with a variety of responses to the crisis. For the little confidence-man, Cottard, the plague suddenly makes the fear and loneliness that he has known for so many years begin to be bearable: as Tarrou says: "He's in the same peril of death as everyone else, but that's just the point; he's in it *with the others*." Or there is the obscure civil service clerk, Joseph Grand, who has been writing a novel for years which never advances beyond an introductory sentence that has been subjected to endless revisions: Grand fights the plague by keeping for the medical authorities a carefully detailed statistical account of its progress, and Camus says half-whimsically that he is the real hero of his tale. Or again there is the Jesuit priest, Fr. Paneloux, who at first responds to the catastrophe by declaring in a sermon that it is a divine chastisement visited upon the citizens of Oran for the purging of their wickedness but who, after witnessing the death-agonies of a little boy, gives up any attempt at rational theodicy for blind faith. And Rambert, a Parisian journalist who is stranded in the city, in the poignancy



of his separation from the woman in Paris whom he loves, embodies one of the book's major themes, the powerlessness even of love before the terrors and disasters of history. But this is not all: for after desperately attempting to arrange his escape from the quarantined city, when everything has been made ready for his being smuggled out, Rambert suddenly decides to remain and to contribute his own strength to the struggle against the plague, for he has discovered that no man is an island and that he is himself diminished by the sufferings that have befallen the people in this city, even though he is a visitor and unconnected by personal ties with the inhabitants.

It is however Jean Tarrou and Bernard Rieux who carry the heaviest freight of the novel's meaning. Tarrou comes to Oran just a few weeks before the onset of the plague: we do not know from where. But, though apparently rootless and unattached, he is a man whose human sympathies prevent his living at any remove from the suffering of men. And, once it becomes clear how disastrous is the emergency that Oran is up against, he organizes teams of "sanitary squads" to fight the ravages of the disease. As a result of this activity, he is soon thrown close to Bernard Rieux, the leading doctor in the town, and between the two there grows up a deep sense of intimacy and friendship. One evening after an exhausting day of work, Tarrou suggests to Rieux that they take off an hour "for friendship," and then he tells Rieux something of what his life has been like. He was the son of a public prosecutor, and his father had wanted him also to go into the law. One day when he was barely seventeen years of age, his father had taken him to court to sit through a murder trial in which he as prosecutor was demanding the death penalty. He still remembers the cowering figure of the little red-haired defendant in the dock, and he tells Rieux that he was so filled with horror at the murder that his father in turn, as the representative of official justice, was pleading for that he fled from his father's house, thereafter to devote his life to the subversion of a society which based itself on the death sentence. "I wanted to square accounts with that poor blind owl in the dock. So I became an agitator, as they say. I didn't want to be pestiferous, that's all." But then he found himself in revolutionary movements which themselves invoked the death sentence, and at first, he says, he accepted this as a necessary temporary expedient — till one day he witnessed a man's death under a firing-squad in Hungary and saw the hole that was left in the man's chest, a hole big enough to thrust one's fist into. It was in that moment, he says, that he realized that he had himself been a carrier of the plague which for years he had supposed himself to be fighting. And from that point forward his pacifism became intransigent. He knows, of course, that "we can't stir a finger in this world without the risk of bringing death to somebody . . . each of us has the plague within him; no one, no one on earth is free from it. . . . All I maintain is that on this earth there are pestilences and there are victims, and it's up to us, so far as possible, not to join forces with the pestilences."

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His path, he says, is "the path of sympathy," and "what interests me is learning how to become a saint . . . without God."

Though one feels that Camus' own vision of things is expressed more unequivocally by Tarrou than by any of the other characters in his fictions, one also feels that it may be Rieux's kind of modest optimism that most clearly approximates Camus' own position. Like Cherea in *Caligula*, Rieux, though an atheist, has no taste for atheistical dialectic. The one occasion on which he evinces any irritation with his friend Tarrou is that on which Tarrou asks him if he believes in God. He replies that of course he does not, but he also indicates his principled impatience with this kind of question. The really vital point, he says in effect, is that creation as we find it is something to be fought against, and when one joins this fight then one is on the right road. All I know, he says to Tarrou, is that "there are sick people and they need curing." He has but one certitude, "that a fight must be put up, in this way or that, and there must be no bowing down. The essential thing was to save the greatest possible number of persons from dying and being doomed to unending separation." And, as he says to Rambert, "There's no question of heroism in all this. It's a matter of common decency" — by which, he says, he means simply doing one's job.

So, when Tarrou speaks to him of his interest in learning how to become a saint without God, Rieux bristles slightly and confesses: "Heroism and sanctity don't really appeal to me, I imagine. What interests me is being a man." To which with a beautiful irony Tarrou replies that he is "less ambitious." Or again, when one day over the death-bed of the little son of the police magistrate, Monsieur Othon, Fr. Paneloux suggests to Rieux that in a way they are partners in working for man's salvation, the doctor replies: "Salvation's much too big a word for me. I don't aim so high. I'm concerned with man's health; and for me his health comes first."

Thus it is that in Jean Tarrou and Bernard Rieux — and especially in the latter — Camus offers us an image of the kind of virtue, of the kind of holiness, that is possible for man in a time when God is absent. And what is clear is that it is a holiness that consists in a certain kind of resistance or revolt. The fundamental ontological realities, Camus seems to be saying, cannot be altered: the universe is not fully comprehensible and does not answer the human demand for clarity and coherence; nor is there any avoidance of that final annulment of the human enterprise in the death that awaits every living creature; nor is there even any way of guaranteeing man's protection against the brutal contingencies of nature and of history. But at least we may struggle *for* man and *against* whatever it is that would thwart or defeat or humiliate his humanity. The way, as Tarrou says, is the way of sympathy, of love, of compassion; and, when we see it as our human vocation to cherish and to defend the life of our fellow-creatures, we have then also undertaken the way of what Camus likes to call resistance, for we have

set ourselves against a world-order that is indifferent to the hopes and aspirations of the human community.

It is indeed the purity of Christ's compassion that explains, I suspect, Camus' profound reverence for the human figure of Jesus. The French critic Roger Quilliot is probably right in saying that "cut off from his divine ascendance, Christ becomes for Camus what he was for Alfred de Vigny, the highest incarnation of . . . human grandeur."<sup>18</sup> He was one who attempted to heal what is broken in human life, to defend mankind against the powers of darkness, and through the depth and scope of his charity he became the great exemplar of *resistance*. We cannot, to be sure, alter the fundamental order of the world, but we can at least refuse to join forces with it and can thus at least in a way revolt against *l'absurde*. Each of us, as Tarrou says, carries "the plague" within himself, but we can at least, through careful vigilance, try to make certain that we do not help to spread it — which is to say that by dedicating ourselves to the relief of human suffering we can to some extent contain it and limit it. It's not a matter of heroism but just of common decency: this is the modest optimism that has guided Camus' reflections on the human problem during the past decade.

It is in the brilliant book that he produced in 1951 on the history of resistance (or "rebellion") that we get the most explicit rendering of this dimension of his thought: in *The Rebel* as in *The Plague* Camus appears as the celebrant of the human communion and a communion that is itself established by and in "rebellion." He suggests that the "slave who has taken orders all his life [and who] suddenly decides that he cannot obey some new command" furnishes perhaps the purest instance of rebellion. For when he says "no, you are going too far," he is saying "that there is something in him which 'is worth while . . . ' and which must be taken into consideration," that for him to do what he is now ordered to do would be for him to consent to a violation of that in him which makes him a man. He acts in other words "in the name of certain values . . . which he feels are common to himself and to all men. . . . It is for the sake of everyone in the world that the slave asserts himself when he comes to the conclusion that a command has infringed on something in him which does not belong to him alone, but which is common ground where all men — even the man who insults and oppresses him — have a natural community." And thus it is, as Camus says, that when a man rebels he "identifies himself with other men and so surpasses himself. . . ." Rebellion then in the widest sense "goes far beyond resentment," for not only does it reveal "the part of man which must always be defended," but it also reveals some essential respect in which the human individual is involved in the family of mankind. "I rebel, therefore we are."

<sup>18</sup>Roger Quilliot, *La Mer et les prisons: Essai sur Albert Camus* (Paris: Gallimard, 1956), pp. 103-104.



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The trouble however, Camus feels, with the great strategists of rebellion in the modern period is that whether, out of a metaphysical radicalism, they have rebelled against the human condition itself or whether, out of a social radicalism, they have rebelled against humanly perpetrated injustice, they have tended in all instances to ignore the idea that is most basically involved in the logic of rebellion, the idea of *mésure*, of balance, of moderation. If one turns to the tradition of metaphysical rebellion — the tradition of Sade and La Fontaine, of Rimbaud and the Surrealists, of Stirner and Nietzsche — one encounters a type of rebel whose belief that God is dead convinces him that man is absolutely free and entitled therefore to do anything — even to commit murder — that promises to hasten the establishment of the dominion of man. And if one turns to the tradition of historical rebellion — the tradition of Saint-Just and Marx, of Hegel and Bakunin, of Lenin and Hitler — one encounters a type of rebel who also believes that God is dead and who concludes that history is therefore to be written in terms of the hazards of force, not even murder being debarred. And what is tragic in each case is that, given the desacralization of life in the modern period, a rebellion that was initiated *for* man turns in the end *against* man, its demonized purposes being consecrated in blood. What is lost is the *mésure* which makes intemperate fanaticism in behalf of any kind of absolute impossible, whether it be the dream of absolute freedom or the dream of absolute justice. This is Camus' critique of the major programs of rebellion that have been developed since the eighteenth century.

Yet, though no orthodox apologist of our time has been more expert than Camus in discerning the fetters that modern secularism has forged for the human spirit, it is significant that he does not conclude that "rebellion" itself has been invalidated. On the contrary: he believes that ours is an age irretrievably *désacralisé* and that rebellion therefore remains "one of the essential dimensions of man." Even in his latest phase Camus has not repudiated the basic lesson of *The Myth of Sisyphus*: to be sure, he does not any longer want to think of himself as an atheist, for, as he said four years ago in *Le Monde*, irreligion now strikes him as entailing an unseemly kind of presumptuous vulgarity: but God *has* disappeared, and the world *is* absurd. Yet, as I have already noticed, he does want to avoid Ivan Karamazov's conclusion that therefore "everything is permitted." He wants in other words to go "beyond nihilism," and it is in this attempt — by way of the reinstatement of the doctrine of *mésure* — that he expects us to discern his departure from the history of modern rebellion.

Now by *mésure*, by the idea of "limit" or "border-line," Camus means something quite simple: he means that rebellion can never be in behalf of total freedom (whether for Sade's aristocrat of libertinism or the Romantic dandy or the Nietzschean Superman or the Marxist proletarian or for anyone else) and that it serves the human communion only when it "puts total freedom up for trial" and

acknowledges that "freedom has its limits everywhere that a human being is to be found — the limit being precisely that human being's power to rebel. . . . The rebel undoubtedly demands a certain degree of freedom for himself; but in no case, if he is consistent, does he demand the right to destroy the existence and the freedom of others. He humiliates no one. The freedom he claims, he claims for all; the freedom he refuses, he forbids everyone to enjoy. He is not only the slave against the master, but also man against the world of master and slave."

The logic then of true rebellion, as Camus understands it, forbids any principle or doctrine that promises to legitimize murder even as a temporary expedient, and this is so, he says, because "rebellion, in principle, is a protest against death. Yet his is no conventional pacifism, for he recognizes that, the world being as it is, were the rebel absolutely to claim not to kill or lie, he would be "renouncing his rebellion and accepting, once and for all, evil and murder. But no more can he agree to kill and lie, since the inverse reasoning which would justify murder and violence would also destroy the reasons for his insurrection. Thus the rebel can never find peace. He knows what is good and, despite himself, does evil. The value that supports him is never given to him once and for all; he must fight to uphold it, unceasingly." But at least like Tarrou "he can put his conviction and passion to work at diminishing the chances of murder around him." And in thus dedicating itself to a relative justice, rebellion may prove that it is neither mere resentment nor some form of disguised imperialism but "love and fecundity" and compassion: it is at this "meridian of thought" that the rebel "rejects divinity in order to share in the struggles and destiny of all men."

From the two central books of his career (*The Plague* and *The Rebel*) then Camus emerges, in the line of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and André Malraux, as a great French poet of *fraternité* for an age that has known the *malaise* of the Absurd. Nor does his most recent novel, *The Fall*, present any major alteration of the basic stress of his thought. Christian students of Camus' work have generally tended to over-react to this book and to read it as a kind of gloss on the Pauline theology of the Fall. It may be of course that, through this embarrassingly acute analysis of pharisaism (in the person of the protagonist, Jean-Baptiste Clamence), Camus is to some extent, as R. W. B. Lewis suggests, groping "toward a new basis for solidarity with his fellows: to what might be called the fellowship of those ashamed, the democracy of the guilty."<sup>16</sup> I suspect however that we shall be closer to the truth about *The Fall* if we approach it in the manner that Camus himself recommends, as a satirical study of a perverted and unhealthy kind of *solidarité*: it is not that Camus is without a doctrine of sin, for this I shall shortly be wanting very strongly to emphasize: the issue is rather perhaps his distaste for a definition of what is unitary in the human community in terms of a principle of evil. Rieux tells us at the end of *The Plague* "what we learn

<sup>16</sup>R. W. B. Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

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in a time of pestilence: that there are more things to admire in men than to despise." But Clamence tells us precisely the opposite, that there is in the human soul nothing but malice and brutish nastiness. And it is through his twisted misanthropy, I suspect, that Camus wants to complete the dialectic of his message by presenting an inversion of the heroism (which is not so much heroism as simply "common decency") that he had dramatized in *The Plague* and theoretically expounded in *The Rebel*.

In the intense and bitter monologue that Clamence delivers to a nameless acquaintance whom he meets in an Amsterdam bar, he reviews his brilliant legal career in Paris and the handsome liberality with which he defended the benighted and the penniless, bestowing his charity on the needy and lending his assistance to the unfortunate. "I freely held sway," he says, "bathed in a light as of Eden. Indeed, wasn't that Eden, *cher monsieur*: no intermediary between life and me?" But there came a time when all this was overturned, for, one evening as he was walking along the banks of the Seine, he heard a drowning woman's terrified cry for help coming out of the darkness, and he ignored it. From that point onwards, he says, the discovery of his own cowardice slowly led him to the realization of how false and farcical had been the beneficent role that he had hitherto been playing. His charities had simply been a way of winning a sense of superiority over people — but, once this was shattered, he began to feel himself a *pauvre type*, and it becomes apparent that his only way of enduring the wound to his pride was to become what he calls a "judge-penitent." That is to say, amidst the foggy gloom of Amsterdam, he now satisfies his need for condescension by gloatingly convicting others of the guilt that festers in his own soul. The more he accuses himself the more, he believes, he has the right to judge other men, and thus the doctrine of sin becomes an instrument of aggrandizement and exploitation. He is in other words — Jean-Baptiste — like his ancient progenitor, a voice crying — *clamans* — in the wilderness, but, unlike the man who entered Judaea, his is a prophecy that promises not salvation but debasement and humiliation. So Camus in *The Fall* is not flirting with any kind of neo-Jansenism, as some of his Christian readers have supposed, but is rather intending to exhibit the kind of morbid perversion of *solidarité* that may be promoted by a soured Manichaeism. He remains in other words the poet and philosopher of *rébellion*.

Now apart from André Malraux and possibly Jean-Paul Sartre, there is no other writer of our day who, while standing outside Christian perspectives, yet seems more ready for dialogue with the Christian community than does Albert Camus. And this is so because, perhaps beyond all his major contemporaries, Camus, both as artist and philosopher, has canvassed the human problem with a singular attentiveness to what is implied for it by the modern crisis of faith. He has, to be sure, in the course of his meditations discovered that even in the midst of winter there is in himself an invincible summer. And those of his Christian

critics who want to go in for the closest kind of bargaining have therefore been quick to conclude that his is a position outside the realm of grace. But I wonder to what extent it is not rather in very large part simply outside what Dietrich Bonhoeffer liked to call "cheap grace" — that is, grace as a spatialized and objectified God, as the old metaphysic of transcendence, as bourgeois respectability without discipleship.<sup>17</sup>

It is true of course that Camus, for all of his allegiance to modern Existentialism (with which his quarrels are always family quarrels), lives very much in the universe of classical Stoicism and of the neo-Stoicism which has been so powerfully expressed in our own period by such writers, superficially so different, as Conrad and Hemingway and Faulkner and Malraux. His is not, to be sure, the metaphysic that generally prevailed in ancient Stoicism, for he cannot be so certain of the rationality of the world-process as an Epictetus or a Marcus Aurelius, and he is unconvinced that human life is steadied and protected by anything transcendent to itself. But the indifference, the austerity, the *apatheia*, with which the rebel faces the silence of the universe is a Stoic *apatheia*, a Stoic courage: it is, as it was for Seneca, a way of safeguarding what is right and reasonable in the human soul against everything in existence by which it might be mutilated or undone. The rebel, as Camus says, "opposes the principle of justice which he finds in himself to the principle of injustice which he sees being applied in the world."

Yet, despite the heavily Stoical cast of Camus' mind, there is one very important respect in which his moral and religious vision is profoundly different from that of classical Stoicism. And it is a difference of which we may be put in mind by an observation which Paul Tillich makes of the Stoics: he says:

The Stoic as a Stoic does not experience the despair of personal guilt. Epictetus quotes as an example Socrates' words in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*: "I have maintained that which is under my control" and "I have never done anything that was wrong in my private or in my public life." And Epictetus himself asserts that he has learned not to care for anything that is outside the realm of his moral purpose. But more revealing than such statements is the general attitude of superiority and complacency which characterizes the Stoic *diatribai*, their moral orations and public accusations. The Stoic cannot say, as Hamlet does, that "conscience" makes cowards of us *all*. He does not see the universal fall from essential rationality to existential foolishness as a matter of responsibility and as a problem of guilt. The courage to be for him is the courage to affirm oneself in spite of fate and death, but it is not the courage to affirm oneself in spite of sin and guilt.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. by R. H. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1949), Chapter I.

<sup>18</sup>Paul Tillich, *op. cit.* p. 17.

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For Camus however we are all, as Tarron says, *dans la peste*, and nowhere in recent literature can we find a more trenchant analysis of the depth of the moral problem than in the closing pages of *The Rebel*. Here he evinces a profound awareness of how deeply every life is involved in a violation of the law of love and of how tragically contaminated is every expedient man uses to secure a tolerable justice. The rebel wants "to serve justice so as not to add to the injustice of the human condition": so "he cannot turn away from the world and from history without denying the very principle of his rebellion." Yet to involve oneself in the drama of history is to be overtaken by the uneasiness of conscience that results from our discovery of the moral ambiguity that inheres in every choice, in every option: there is no "motive that does not have its limits in evil." To renounce the project of making the human person respected is to "renounce rebellion and fall back on an attitude of nihilistic consent." Yet to "insist that human identity should be recognized as existing" is to undertake a commitment that will prevent my unqualifiedly rejecting violence. "If the rebel makes no choice, he chooses the silence and slavery of others. If, in a moment of despair, he declares that he opts both against God and against history, he is the witness of pure freedom; in other words, of nothing." But then to ally oneself with the struggle for man is to pledge oneself to an effort that may in some sense entail a legitimization of murder — despite the fact that "rebellion, in principle, is a protest against death." Thus, as Camus says in the passage from which I have already quoted, "the rebel can never find peace. He knows what is good and, despite himself, does evil." "Rebellion . . . sets us on the path of calculated culpability," and it is in *mésure* that we have the one hope of its being redeemed.

So, though in some measure the vision of this Frenchman has its affiliation with the Stoic tradition, he very clearly in no wise represents the moral complacency of classical Stoicism. On the contrary: he tells us that the rebel must confront the moral ambiguity of human existence "indefatigably." And the question therefore arises as to how, within the perspectives of Camus' thought, this is possible. What is it in other words that enables him to affirm the human enterprise as passionately as he does, "in spite of sin and guilt"?

The answer to this question is, I believe, to be found in its clearest form in his early book *Noces* ("Nuptials," published in Algiers by Charlot in 1938), in the volume of essays called *L'Été* ("Summer," published in Paris by Gallimard in 1954), and in the final chapter of *The Rebel*. We are reminded, when we turn to the book of 1938, that Camus, having grown up in Algeria, is by birth and nurture a North African, and the four essays that comprise this slender volume are devoted to the Mediterranean countryside which formed the scene of his youth. They are a veritable "manual of happiness," and what is celebrated is a "loving alliance" between man and the earth — the riot and play and fecundity, the glory and the grandeur of the world. Camus speaks of places, of Tipasa and Djémila and



Algiers and Florence: he speaks of the heat of the sun, of the magnificence of the sea, of the tanned bodies on the beach, of the cool evenings and the quiet Mediterranean dusks. He makes us smell the heavy fragrances of North African plants: he makes us see the riotous colors of the Tuscan landscape; and we are drenched in the rich, sensual carnality of wind and rain, of gardens and the desert, of sky and sea. He records how as a youth he "learned to consent to the earth and to burn in the dark flame of its celebrations." And in one characteristic sentence he says: "I must be naked and plunge into the sea . . . and consummate on my own flesh the embrace for which, lips to lips, earth and sea have for so long been sighing."

It is this same opulence of language, of emotion, of love, that animates the essays written between 1939 and 1953 which are brought together in *L'Été*. In *Noces* he was attempting to express the "simple accord" that he felt between himself and the rich, luxuriant field of life, and it is this same purpose which controls the rhetoric of the eight meditations that form *L'Été*. "In the center of our work," he says in this book, "shines an inexhaustible sun," and it is this — the dazzling brilliance and beauty and splendor of the world — it is this, he confesses, that protects him against despair. And in the essay called "Retour à Tipasa" ("Return to Tipasa"), there occurs a crucial passage in which he says:

At noon on the half-sandy slopes covered with heliotropes like a foam left by the furious waves of the last few days as they withdrew, I watched the sea barely swelling at that hour with an exhausted motion, and I satisfied the two thirsts one cannot long neglect without drying up — I mean loving and admiring. For there is merely bad luck in not being loved; there is misfortune in not loving. All of us, today, are dying of this misfortune. For violence and hatred dry up the heart itself; the long fight for justice exhausts the love that nevertheless gave birth to it. . . . But in order to keep justice from shrivelling up like a beautiful orange fruit containing nothing but a bitter, dry pulp, I discovered once more at Tipasa that one must keep intact in oneself a freshness, a cool wellspring of joy, love the day that escapes injustice, and return to combat having won that light. . . . In the middle of winter I at last discovered that there was in me an invincible summer.

Now this "invincible summer" is not any mere Stoic *apatheia*, it is no mere capacity for endurance, for martial fortitude, for preserving the stiff lip despite the assaults of experience: it is instead something really glowing and positive and does indeed, I believe, partake of what Paul Tillich with his genius for definition has called "absolute faith," the faith which creates the courage of self-affirmation not only "in spite of fate and death" but also "in spite of sin and guilt." "An analysis of the nature of absolute faith," says Dr. Tillich,

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reveals the following elements in it. The first is the experience of the power of being which is present even in face of the most radical manifestation of non-being. . . . The vitality that can stand the abyss of meaninglessness is aware of a hidden meaning within the destruction of meaning. The second element in absolute faith is the dependence of the experience of nonbeing on the experience of being and the dependence of the experience of meaninglessness on the experience of meaning. Even in the state of despair one has enough being to make despair possible. There is a third element in absolute faith, the acceptance of being accepted. Of course, in the state of despair there is nobody and nothing that accepts. But there is the power of acceptance itself which is experienced. Meaninglessness, as long as it is experienced, includes an experience of the "power of acceptance." To accept this power of acceptance consciously is the religious answer of absolute faith, of a faith which has been deprived by doubt of any concrete content, which nevertheless is faith and the source of the most paradoxical manifestation of the courage to be.<sup>19</sup>

And I wonder if we have not here an analysis that very nearly describes Camus' prehension of human life. Is not the invincible summer that he has discovered in the midst of winter his testimony of an "experience of the power of being . . . in face of the most radical manifestation of nonbeing"? And are not the hymns in *Noces* and *L'Eté* to the beautiful plenitude and splendor of the world his testimony to an experience of at-one-ment with Being-itself, an experience that goes deeper even than the experience of the Absurd? He speaks in *Noces* of "the smile of complicity" that he "exchanged" with the brilliant smile of the Mediterranean sea and sky and wind and stars, and I wonder if this is not his obscure testimony to a deep intuition of something like what Dr. Tillich calls "the power of acceptance." Perhaps this is what it is that *enables* him to confront the fact that, though the rebel knows what is good, nevertheless he does evil. Rebellion, he says in the final chapter of *The Rebel*, "cannot exist without a strange form of love" — the love, that is, of "the real grandeur" of the world, and it is out of this love that there is born "that strange joy which helps one live and die."

It may be in other words that Camus really does know something that approximates the Christian experience of justification and has really perhaps in some sense apprehended "the God above the God of theism." It is true of course that here a very radical scepticism has undercut most of the concrete symbolism of Christian faith, and a profound impatience with traditional apologetics inhibits any decisive movement in the direction of the metaphysical personalism of biblical

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<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

religion. But surely it is clear that in Camus there is an equally profound sense of the "transpersonal presence of the divine"<sup>20</sup> which is also an element of biblical faith, and we have, I think, ample testimony in his writings that this is for him a rich and deep source of the confidence and the courage that enable him to go "beyond nihilism": so perhaps this is a modern man who does not altogether live outside the realm of grace.

Camus is of course still in mid-career. It is said that there are three works that are currently in progress — a novel that will be called *The First Man*, a play to be called *Doctor Juan*, and an essay on *The Myth of Nemesis*. So the circle of definition that is to be drawn about his testimony cannot yet be completed. But though one does not want to baptize him by any kind of *tour de force*, an attentive reading of his work ought, I believe, to indicate how shortsighted it is to understand the version of the modern story that he is giving us as entailing nothing more than might be suggested by such old counters as "neo-paganism" or "existentialist nihilism."

Two years ago in an eloquent statement in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Charles Rolo spoke of Camus as "a good man,"<sup>21</sup> and though I suspect he may himself be embarrassed when his critics respond to him as though he were "a moral force," it is nevertheless something of the sort that we feel. For here is a man who has in no way chosen to live at any comfortable remove from the tension and unrest of his age. As participant in the French Resistance during the war years, as newspaper editor and political ideologist, as theatrical director in the Parisian theatre, as artist and thinker he has lived in the very center of the maelstrom of contemporary history and has done this without recourse to any of the false safeties and securities by which European intellectuals in recent years have sometimes been compromised: he has done this only with the courage of a kind of "absolute faith" which passionately affirms the worthfulness of the human enterprise in spite of its apparent absurdity. And in him we have a noble example of "the courage to be" in a representative man of our age — rooted perhaps "in the God who appears when God has disappeared in the anxiety of doubt."<sup>22</sup> The Swedish Academy was therefore, I believe, on the right track when in the Nobel Prize citation it honored him for illuminating "the problems of the human conscience in our time." This is precisely what Camus has done, and it is to be hoped that those whose confessions of faith are fuller and more robust than his will not forego the risks of joining with him in the kind of dialogue which all of his work seems implicitly to propose.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>21</sup>Charles Rolo, "Albert Camus: A Good Man," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 201, No. 5 (May 1958).

<sup>22</sup>Paul Tillich, *op. cit.*, p. 190.



# Religion and the Arts

## The Coming Dangers

HARRY R. GARVIN

Religion is once more seeking the hand of Beauty. But this time — for the first time in our Western tradition — Religion is doing so beseechingly, beguilingly rather than forcefully or condescendingly. After such knowledge, Beauty will find it possible to forgive what has happened in the past if Religion continues to remember the past. In this novel courtship, the mutual benefits are unmistakable and may prove extraordinary.

The world is now in a period of its cultural and political history when it needs to discover harmonies among the major enterprises of the human mind — art, religion, science, philosophy — more than it needs the exciting adventures in conflicts. But the nature of true harmony in such spheres must be understood if we are to avoid making such a harmony impossible by encouraging religion or art or science or philosophy to make categorical, improper demands upon the others and if we are to avoid being satisfied with an illusory harmony through mere rhetoric and warm, indiscriminate notions. Most careful thinkers today hesitate to announce that they have solved these problems in the unity of culture. Indeed at each critical point in a culture, “harmonies” and “unities” need to be re-explored. Before developing a phase of this theoretical problem, I should like to discuss some practical problems in regard to the desired harmony of religion and beauty.

At the moment the well-wishers of their engagement are enthusiastic and vocal. Once the engagement becomes fully public, however, it will arouse many conscious and unconscious opponents and skeptics: the idolaters of art and the idolaters of religion, the insensitive to aesthetic or to religious experiences, the Puritans in the churches and the anti-clerics in the arts, those who want to continue in the churches the tradition of Rauschenbusch and the social gospel or the tradition of psychology and psychological counselling. Many Christians are simply willing to continue fasting from art. It is imperative, therefore, that the Christians who are devotees of both religion and the arts (including literature) anticipate the coming dangers and carefully enlist the aid of many objective churchmen, artists, and humanists who are at present suspending their judgments of this new movement in the churches. The devotees can keep the movement from erring, from becoming a fad, a pleasant cadenza, a mere diversion of the vital

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energy of the churches. Unfortunately there are already some signs that the devotees themselves are engendering forces that may finally debilitate the movement.

I shall discuss some of the coming dangers in an analysis of the implications of the recent engagement for aesthetics and criticism, for the taste of the churches and churchgoers, and for the artists and the arts.

### I

For my purposes here, aesthetics will include primarily such problems as the creative process of the artist, the nature of the art object, and the aesthetic experience; and criticism will include theories of literature and other arts and the explanation, evaluation, and appreciation of the form and content of works of art in relative isolation and in their total cultural context.

The period ahead it seems to me calls for adventuresome speculation by aestheticians with religious backgrounds and for a wary re-assessment by Christian critics of their positions regarding literary theory and literary history. There are indications that we should have good hope for the first and a fainting hope for the second.

To aestheticians with insights into religious and aesthetic experiences many old and emerging problems beckon. Examples abound. In what senses is a Giovanni Bellini *Madonna and Child* an art object as well as a religious object? In what senses, precisely, is *Guernica* a religious object and an art object? What distinguishes a religious symbol from other symbols? How can we differentiate an aesthetic experience from a religious experience, either in or outside a house of worship? And what distinguishes a moral experience from these experiences? Is there a difference in kind, aesthetically speaking, between a Bach chorale prelude (without words) and his cantata *Christ lag in Todesbanden*? Christian aestheticians are the ones most likely to illuminate the available insights into such problems so that many others may learn to possess the insights.

In the area of criticism, Christian writers have made a more substantial contribution to literary theory and to the exposition and interpretation of works of art than to literary and cultural history.

They have shown the power and significance of the Christian tradition in literature and other arts and have thereby remedied the errors or omissions of more secular critics. Though critics with a clearly Christian point of view have not convinced many secular critics that criticism is ultimately "theological," they have helped reveal the inadequacies and incompleteness of, for example, formalistic criticism, Freudian criticism, Marxist and sociological criticism. By providing a fuller cultural context for literature, they have also begun to have a salutary effect upon teachers of literature and upon students. The aesthetic theories of Maritain

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and the critical notions of Eliot, to name only two major figures, have been put into the market place and have deservedly attracted some of the best eyes and sensibilities. Even the opponents of Maritain and Eliot always sense in them an abiding love of the arts and a scrupulous awareness of the aesthetic values in a work of art. Indeed among the readily known Protestant and Catholic critics and scholars in America and in England, one is hard put to find examples of an unsophisticated insensitiveness to aesthetic values or of a bias that forces every great tale to adorn a creed.

Regarding the criticism of individual works and authors, no reputable Christian critic — so far — has maintained that "The World Is Too Much With Us" because of its "paganism" is thereby inferior to a number of Wordsworth's ecclesiastical sonnets; or that "Tintern Abbey" is ultimately a rather inferior poem because by 1798 Wordsworth had not come close enough to an acceptable Christian philosophy. So far one is not confronted by the opinion that Whittier is a better poet than Emily Dickinson because his ideas are more Christian; or that G. K. Chesterton is better poet than Wallace Stevens; or that Graham Greene, because of his Augustinianism, is a better novelist than Hemingway; or that Uhde is greater than Picasso. But Christian reticence and taste are not inevitable.

Taken all in all, Emerson is one of the greatest American moralists; but may not a strictly Christian evaluation soon emphasize only the solipsistic elements in his transcendentalism? Suppose that the Christian point of view in criticism becomes as ascendant in departments of literature as the "New Criticism" was until very recently. Will the voices — "catholic" and careful — of Tillich and Maritain soon be drowned out by that of C. S. Lewis for example and then by an increasing number of professors of literature who will know more about theology than imagery, more about Pelagian and Romantic heresies than about poetic strategies, more about philosophical abstractions than about form? I hope I am exaggerating the danger. But let us recall that the winds of many doctrines have blown within the domain of criticism and all through the groves of academe. The arts have both intrinsic and instrumental values; it is provincial to overlook the latter but disastrous to pay only lip service to the former. Professors and critics too readily emphasize the instrumental values while pursuing one or another current ideology, whether the ideology be sociological, political, psychological, or religious.

The danger in Christian critical evaluations is only on the horizon, but the danger in the interpretations of literary history and of culture is already within us. In their interpretations of western culture since the later Middle Ages, Christian apologists have attacked, usually with zeal and excess, everything that seems unwelcome to them in science, philosophy, literature, the arts, politics, education, humanism. The axe requires less training than the rapier. Surely C. S. Lewis and T. S. Eliot in their notions of culture are acutely vulnerable polemicists; and there are ironies in American history other than those found by Reinhold Niebuhr,

and deeper ones. Even the interpretations by Tillich and Maritain of the crises and future imperatives in Western culture command more respect than assent from most students of culture. Tillich and Maritain remain, after all, imperialists in their doctrines despite their enormous efforts to be sympathetic towards doctrines they consider wayward.

Less careful Christian apologists have begun to interpret the most serious literary and intellectual movements since the sixteenth century in terms of spiritual pathologies and prideful caricatures of Christianity. Such an apologist is still willing to recognize an ethics of total sincerity in the contemporary novel and to ferret out poignant beauties in the misdirected ecstasies of the Romantic mind; he finds an inchoate morality in the rationalistic and deistic mind, some nobility in the pride of the Renaissance mind, and a touch of divinity in the scientific mind. But if zealous, careless Christian interpreters are able to dominate the departments of literature and other humanistic fields, they will soon destroy the good hope that religion and the arts can re-animate each other. These interpreters will suffer from an incandescent hostility to everything that begins to look like a "substitute-religion" and from a latent hostility to any culture dominated by secular minds. It is a simple matter to discover some kind of erring "humanism" in any literary or philosophical movement. Once a *bête noire*, even an innocent one, is descried, a St. George will be rushed to the fray.

The zealous apologists of course have a right to press their attacks upon the modern world and to consider themselves the saving remnant of a world no one intended. Indeed the most radical Christian positions in criticism and aesthetics deserve attention in the market place — together with the radical positions of Marxists, psychologists, sociologists, formalists. The arts and criticism must ever suspect any dominant doctrine of trying to exercise tyranny over them. Once in power, will the religious mind exercise restraint, after many centuries of considering itself an alien in the golden realms of art? In the realms of art and spirit no tyranny is so unpardonable as religious tyranny — or so antithetical to "The Protestant Principle." Once dominant, will the Christian critics grow tired of the disorder in the market place and wish for a sacerdotal immunity from blasphemous competitors? If so, a conflict between religious and secular critics — the phrases in juxtaposition are chilling — is inevitable. Whatever the outcome of such a conflict, the engagement between Beauty and Religion will be roughly broken.

I exaggerate, it seems to me. The suspicious and historical hostility of intellectuals and artists to the domination of the arts by religion will surely keep Christian interpreters from gaining such prideful power. Under the influence of Tillich and others, Protestant Christianity in this country has been gaining a catholicity of interests and sympathy; and the influence of Maritain has deepened Catholic understanding of non-Catholic doctrines. If these influences of Maritain

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and Tillich persist — and I feel no assurances here — Christian leaders will remain aware of not only the glories of Christian catholicities but also of the dangers in the provincial and apparently ineradicable desire of Christians to dominate all ultimate realms.

So long as Christian critics remain uncorrupted by their power to influence taste and the arts, the vigorous attacks and defenses of the critics will be corrective and salutary. Secular and religious critics have already demonstrated that a catholicity of mind is not only necessary but possible. What good will it do to keep repeating that the secularism is mainly responsible for the substantial loss of man's faith in God and subsequently man's faith in man, and that religion is mainly to blame for the dissociation since the Renaissance of religion from knowledge and beauty? Most secular critics are willing calmly to explore the position that criticism is ultimately theological; many of them may even find their own ultimate positions not too far away. The act of criticism is different in kind from experiencing aesthetically, and by its very nature criticism demands a catholicity of mind. A particular Christian theory of tragedy may not convince a secular critic, but he will become antagonistic and condescending only if that theory insists that redemptive elements in artistic tragedy are not possible except in a play with a Christian view of life. The secular critic can readily point out the subtle redemptive elements in Greek tragedy, in Shakespeare, even in O'Neill, Hemingway, and Tennessee Williams; and he can warn against turning tragedy toward melodrama, didacticism, and easy redemptions. He can also point out the dangers, artistic and otherwise, that Christian critics run into when they first acknowledge sympathetically the negative witness by modern artists and then demand that these writers and painters start to bear positive witness rather than merely to describe the human condition and barely to extricate a few slender virtues from life.

The primary function of artists is to illuminate those aspects of the human condition they can express *artistically*; and they should not offer positive theological and metaphysical witness unless they can do so artistically. Christian aestheticians and critics used to ask too little of the arts; unless they exercise prudence, they will not avoid the danger of asking too much.

## II

In regard to the aesthetic taste of the churchgoers and college students, the coming danger is that the Christian leaders of the new movement in religion will begin by asking too much and later be willing to accept too little. If however these leaders succeed substantially in elevating and then transforming the taste of Christians, this age may well be called the heroic age of Christian sensibility.



Unfortunately, the sense of the best in the arts is ever the enemy of the common taste, and even the good can become the enemy of the best.

It is clear that the major theological impetus for the new attitude towards the arts comes from Tillich's exciting Protestant catholicity. No matter how the concept of ultimate concern turns out in the history of theology, the concept can forever make provision for the return of Protestant Christianity to all the arts in the best sense even if the majority of Christians never approach either religion or the arts primarily in terms of ultimate concern. The leaders of the new movement today want Christians to search for deep religious meanings: in Picasso and Munch; in *The Old Man and the Sea* and not in *The Robe*; in *Man's Fate* and not in DeMille's *Ten Commandments* or Dr. Peale's columns. If Tillich and his adherents can maintain some pre-eminence in Protestant theology, can transform the aesthetic sensibilities of a majority of Christians, and can deepen their concern in individual and social living, then the heroic age in Christian sensibility and perhaps a new golden age of Christianity will have come. We should keep in mind however that for many kinds of Christians a heroic age of sensibility is neither possible nor clearly desirable.

It is admirable that among the leaders of the new movement the main tendency now is to develop a sense of the best. But can we really expect the churches to raise the aesthetic taste of churchgoers above that of the average college professor and of the better-than-average clergyman today? Only in the universities and perhaps soon in the seminaries can there be a ready opportunity to develop the fine aesthetic sensibilities; elsewhere everyone is more subject to mass tastes. Among professors of religion who are not teaching courses that make use of the arts, we cannot expect more than an objective attitude towards the new movement in Christianity. Not many departments of religion and schools of theology are likely to emulate the exciting program in "theology and the humanities" at the University of Chicago. In the seminaries it is possible to train a goodly number of future clergymen (if they are specially selected) to become receptive to rich aesthetic values in literature, in new church architecture, in liturgy and ritual, in church music and drama. They will thereby be able to help combat the Philistinism powerful among congregations and in society generally. A pastor in a fashionable suburb may induce a number of his flock to listen sympathetically to a new oratorio, participate in a community production of *Murder In the Cathedral*, read Camus' *The Fall* for a monthly meeting of the art study group. If however the enthusiastic pastor decides to make the study group appeal to a majority of his congregation, he will have to appeal less to the sense of the best and more to the sense of the good and finally to the sense of the average. Of a Sunday morning I can see clergymen in pulpits across the land sucking best-sellers dry.

The greatest paintings, poetry, drama, novels can deeply arouse and nurture



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heroic Christian sensibilities of which unfortunately there will never be too many. Merely good works of art — for example *Tea and Sympathy*, *Darkness at Noon*, *East of Eden*, *The Caine Mutiny*, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* — may appeal more readily to most students and churchgoers but arouse very few enduringly. The desire to interest larger and larger numbers of students and church members will inevitably come and standards will inevitably fall. Why should students and churchgoers spend time looking for "ultimate" significance in "classical" and progressive jazz, for "world-views implicit in comic strips," and for "the theology of science fiction?" Let the few who can do so study the ultimate religious values in Mozart's "Requiem," Stravinsky's "Mass," and Beethoven's "Quartet No. 14 (Op. 131)"; in *The Divine Comedy*, *Faust*, *Othello*; in Rouault's "Old King." We do not need jazz and science fiction and the facile best-seller to show us that nothing human, non-human, and inhuman is alien to the religious mind, that there is a divinity to be discovered in a bare walnut tree and in a pair of old shoes, that a leaf of grass is no less than the journeywork of the stars. The churches have many other ways of appealing to the hosts of students and churchgoers with limited aesthetic sensibilities. The use by the churches of third-rate and fourth-rate art seems desperate and unnecessary.

Indeed it is important to realize that too powerful an emphasis on even the best art works will arouse some dormant but by no means unconscious antagonisms within the Christian body itself. There is no need here to describe the historical and contemporary reasons for the ineradicable wariness of religion (Catholic as well as Protestant and Hebrew) concerning the arts. What is more, the church traditions of the social gospel and of psychological counselling are still vital forces in Christianity, and rightly so. Christianity has suffered from too many sins of omission and commission in regard to social action and from too many sins of pride in regard to its knowledge of man and personality to feel justified in diminishing its efforts in these fields. Today Christianity has need of all possible vital forces. The genius of Protestantism, it seems to me, lies in its diversity, in its ability to satisfy a host of central and peripheral religious needs. No single practical emphasis or theological emphasis can arrogate to itself too much dominance and expect to carry most of Protestantism with it for long. In the coming programs of art in the churches the leaders should make sure that the churches not lose the enthusiasm of Christian ameliorists of social and psychological ills.

### III

No doubt the spokesmen for religion are right when they maintain that many modern artists in order to create more profoundly need the insights available to them in ultimate religious experiences. Beauty is always in danger of preening itself before a wilderness of mirrors. Although the literary and secular tradition

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by now has its own rich resources of moral, philosophic, and even religious insights, it needs to look more acutely into other ways of experiencing ultimate values. The question is how religion can offer the arts its special insights without arousing mutual antagonisms or mutual condescensions that will prolong the dissociation of aesthetic sensibility from religion.

Random enthusiasms and busy church programs in the arts may not do much harm, but they can hardly do much good. Will the churches foster the sense of the best in the writers, painters, sculptors who are encouraged and even commissioned by the churches? Or will they end up asking craftsmen to cater to the prevailing tastes of churchgoers? The churches should do everything they can to help the most serious artists combat the Philistinism in society. The churches can arrange for travelling exhibitions of good and especially the best art. They can help bring into their communities fine musicians, painters, and acting companies. To receive commissions from churches would undoubtedly encourage some serious painters, sculptors, and of course architects; but I doubt that commissions to write religious dramas, pretty much to order, will lead to significant art. If the churches put energy into making the popular arts — the comics, the soap opera, the popular song, the musical comedy, and advertising art — carry the Christian message, the churches may gain some members and craftsmen some additional income but the arts and serious artists will gain nothing. In our society craftsmen already have all the encouragement they need. Apparently the most serious artists can receive only a modicum of encouragement from the churches. The hard, unfortunate fact is that the very best in the arts can be deeply understood by relatively few.

Religion and Beauty should be friendly and sympathetic on all levels, but only on the levels where they can share ultimate insights can they be truly engaged.

#### IV

Those of us who desire a proper rapprochement between the arts and religion should demand neither too much nor too little. If we insist upon a thoroughgoing "unity" between them, we shall have to impose one upon them artificially and categorically. The searches for philosophic unity within religion itself, within the arts, and within science are far from complete; and the philosophical quest for the unity of culture, in terms of the twentieth century, is yet to be realized. In the meantime, whiffs of candor can invigorate the quests and make them heroic adventures.

On theoretical grounds it seems reasonable at this stage in the quest to consider art, religion, science as autonomous; on practical grounds, it would be prudent at least to treat each of them as autonomous. Scientists, artists, philos-

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ophers, and theologians have long and good reasons to suspect one another of using other disciplines as handmaidens rather than as spiritual companions.

Even at this stage, however, autonomy does not preclude some theoretical and practical "harmonies" between religion and the arts. It is at some rather than at all critical and ultimate points that art and religion can meet naturally, freely, significantly. Some of the "differences" between the two are irrelevant to theory because "God" is irrelevant to the theory is itself irrelevant to the status of "God" in a theological system or in "reality" itself. Contraries are not contradictories, and paradoxes are not even contraries. Unless an artist, a theologian, a scientist, and a philosopher have as a referent the same part of each other. The fact that "God" is excluded from a strictly systematic scientific "reality" — and more often than not they refer to different parts even when they use the same terms — their statements and propositions cannot accurately be said to contradict or to affirm one another. The proposed harmonies in ideals, in ultimate values, in aesthetic and religious experiences may at this stage be modest ones, but they are not so verbal or so simple that they cannot justifiably include certain dissonances, even if other dissonances must be excluded for the time being and perhaps forever. A modest harmony is better than an imposed unity.

I am therefore suggesting that the engagement between religion and the arts remain an abiding engagement that probably will never lead to marriage. Harmony like unity has its own special glories. If we look at the history of Religion and Beauty, we can rejoice at the prospect of such an engagement. For an abiding engagement remains extraordinary, profound, free.

# Moral Crisis as Structural Principle in Fiction

## A Few American Examples

RANDALL STEWART

I claim no originality for the principle; it has doubtless been used many times. But I haven't seen it applied with any consistency or continuity to the American novel where in several cases, at least, it seems applicable. And its application in these several cases seems to me to throw light on both structure and, more important, meaning. Moreover the interpretations so arrived at are at variance in certain instances with those rather widely held: so much so that one sometimes wonders what kind of "insight" some of our most accomplished readers bring to these works. The novels which I propose to deal with from this standpoint are *The Scarlet Letter*, *Billy Budd*, *The American*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and *Sister Carrie*.

Arthur Dimmesdale's problem is whether or not to confess. The crisis extends from his acquiescence in the forest scene in Hester's plan to run away and his public confession on the scaffold. Hawthorne doesn't give a full account of what intervened, but he gives a good deal. He tells of Dimmesdale's being tempted on his way back to commit various blasphemies and obscenities. (Dimmesdale might have exclaimed with Cotton Mather, "Was ever man so tempted as I? Was ever man so completely given over to the Devil?") And he tells us that as soon as he reached his study, he tore up the sermon he had written and began furiously to write a new one. And this is about all Hawthorne does to fill in the gap. Perhaps he didn't want to run the risk of weakening his climax, of lessening the shock of surprise when the minister mounts the scaffold. But the reader understands a few basic things: that Arthur has been reduced to utter despair, that out of his dire extremity he has called upon God, and that he has done this only after a life-and-death struggle with the flesh. In general, in Hawthorne's view of things, virtue, if it comes at all, comes only after a life-and-death struggle.

If Hawthorne were writing *The Scarlet Letter* today, I believe he would end the story with Arthur's confession. The rest is largely by way of epilogue, a concession to the sort of reader who wants to know what happened to Chilling-

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worth, to Hester, to little Pearl. Chillingworth's death (especially the manner of it) and Hester's return, it is true, have a certain relevance to the action, but Pearl's subsequent career is quite irrelevant.

The moral crisis is Arthur's and only Arthur's. Hester had none because her mind was not divided. She had no understanding of Arthur's problem. She proposed a solution which was fine for her: a change of residence to a more congenial community would remove her difficulties because they were largely external. But Arthur's divided soul warred within him, and his civil war would have continued with little if any abatement in any part of the world. Arthur's confession resolved his difficulty; the decision was his, and it was made without Hester's knowledge or consent. It came with as much surprise to her as to the other members of the congregation. The resolution then is made through Arthur's moral agency; Hester is a contributing force, though one working in a contrary direction.

If Dimmesdale's confession is the high point of *The Scarlet Letter*, an event even more startling is the high point of *Billy Budd*: Billy's crying out in clarion tones from the yard-arm, "God bless Captain Vere." The preparatory stages by which Billy arrives at this super-human eminence are even less clearly set forth than the corresponding portion of *The Scarlet Letter*. For it is a super-human eminence at which Billy arrives: "Love your enemies . . . Pray for them which despitefully use you." Of course Captain Vere is not Billy's "enemy" and does not "despitefully use" him: but he is responsible for the death sentence, and Billy knows this. To the "natural" man he would appear in the guise of enemy. That Billy blesses him is the spiritual miracle of the story.

The preparatory scene is the interview between the Captain and Billy after the verdict has been reached. Billy's blow struck at Claggart had been an act of defiance; the scene with the Captain is one of reconciliation. The narrative, told conjecturally, opens up almost unlimited possibilities: Vere "may in the end have caught Billy to his heart even as Abraham may have caught young Isaac"; "there is no telling the sacrament." But that there has been a change in Billy, a transformation, a new insight, is shown symbolically by the disappearance of the speech impediment as he spoke the last words and by the author's description of Billy's "personal beauty" at this last moment as "spiritualized now through late experiences so poignantly profound."

Melville's epilogue is more integral than Hawthorne's. The Captain's death-bed murmur "Billy Budd, Billy Budd" (recalling the elder Pierre's "My daughter, my daughter," and emphasizing as in *Pierre* the parental relation) is significant, and so is the sailors' reverence for the yard-arm, even pieces of it, as if it were the Cross of Christ. They both refer back meaningfully to the main action, which is Billy's, the Captain, like Hester (though more understanding than Hester) playing an ancillary role.

If the moral crisis is incompletely described in *The Scarlet Letter* and only hinted at in *Billy Budd* (perhaps because both authors after the manner of the old-fashioned romance or melodrama wished to preserve the impact of surprise), Christopher Newman's moral crisis is described in detail, James being a "realist" who (as Coleridge said of Shakespeare) preferred expectation to surprise. Newman's problem is what to do with the letter — to use it or not to use it — and the crisis is a prolonged affair which begins with his getting possession of the incriminating document and ends with his burning it. The reader knows that he won't use it because James has prepared us so thoroughly for the outcome ("What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"). The early incident of the dash to Wall Street in a hack is almost too obviously "planted." But Newman doesn't know he won't use it, for a long time, and the stages by which he arrives at his final decision are related with the meticulous detail of the new realism.

"Crisis" is primarily a medical word and means in dictionary terms the change in a disease which indicates whether the result is to be recovery or death. Newman's crisis is prolonged over weeks and months. He visits the Convent and hears the wail of the Carmelite nuns; he confronts, accuses, makes his demand upon the intransigent Bellegardes ("Give me back Madame de Cintré!"): he calls on the Duchess and realizes the futility of any appeal in that quarter; he travels in England, returns to the United States, returns to Paris. He visits Mrs. Tristram, still in a defiant mood: "Good God! Do you expect me to forgive?" He revisits the Convent: "It told him that the woman within was lost beyond recall." He goes to Notre Dame: "this was the best place he could be in . . . a great cathedral offers a very various hospitality." He didn't pray: he didn't kneel. Instead "he leaned his head for a long time on the chair in front of him." James' account of what happens in these crucial minutes is as follows:

When he took his head up he felt that he was himself again. Somewhere in his mind, a tight knot seemed to have loosened. He thought of the Bellegardes; he had almost forgotten them. He remembered them as people he had meant to do something to. He gave a groan as he remembered what he had meant to do; he was annoyed at having meant to do it; the bottom, suddenly, had fallen out of his revenge. Whether it was Christian charity or unregenerate good nature — what it was, in the background of his soul — I don't pretend to say; but Newman's last thought was that of course he would let the Bellegardes go. If he had spoken it aloud, he would have said that he didn't want to hurt them. They had hurt him, but such things were really not his game. At last, he got up and came out of the darkening church; not with the elastic step of a man who has won a victory or taken a resolve, but strolling soberly, like a good-natured man who is still a little ashamed.



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The account is a little equivocal. "Whether it was Christian charity or unregenerate good nature" is a theological straddle. "Unregenerate good nature" presupposes the romantic doctrine of innate goodness. "Christian charity" presupposes the Christian doctrine of original sin, for Christian forgiveness starts from a recognition of one's own sins ("Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"). But the scales are turned in favor of the Christian view of the matter toward the end of the passage: Newman is "ashamed," and at the very end he "is still a little ashamed." That is, he is conscious chiefly of his own guilt, the guilt of having entertained thoughts of revenge. He realizes in effect that vengeance is the Lord's.

The book ends with the burning of the letter. There is no epilogue. "What becomes of Christopher Newman?" the conventional reader asks. "Did he stay on in Paris, stretching his legs on Mrs. Tristram's balcony?" "Did he return to America, make more money, marry an American heiress?" James the artist is adamant against the temptation to indulge the reader's idle curiosity (as Hawthorne was not when he told of Pearl's later career). Any aftermath must be supplied by the reader's own imagination, because Newman's moral crisis is resolved, the proper action of the book is finished.

James, who had a consummate sense of structure, stands at the opposite pole to Mark Twain, who has no sense of structure at all or almost none. Huck's problem of course is whether to stick to Jim or turn him in. It is a moral crisis of the first magnitude, and Mark Twain describes it very well. On one side was the societal pressure, the custom of the country, and Huck — outcast that he was — felt the pressure acutely. According to the Southern antebellum mores, the lowest-down thing a white man could do was to help a Negro slave escape, and understandably so because slaves were property, they represented a substantial expenditure of money. The more Huck thought about this side of the question, the more his "conscience went to grinding" him. After he had written the letter to Miss Watson, he began to think how good Jim had been to him and how he was the only friend Jim had in the world. "It was a close place," this famous account continues; "I took up the letter, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: 'All right then, I'll go-to hell' — and tore it up." Here is one of the supreme examples in literature of moral agency at work.

Mark Twain's use of the word "conscience" is interesting. He uses it to mean not the still small voice, the voice of God, but a socially conditioned response, and the hell to which Huck is willing to go is the hell to which his society consigned all such malefactors. One wonders if the author had not been reading William Graham Sumner, the Yale sociologist. One wonders too if Huck's conscience wasn't grinding him also while he was thinking of Jim's side

of the debate, and if it wasn't conscience, then by what name one would call it. The reader who is unwilling to accept such a sociological definition of "conscience" may resent for a moment the sly trick, but he forgets this offense against language in his admiration for the magnificent demonstration of Huck's ability to resist the social pressures, realizing full well that the sociologists who provided Mark Twain with his concept of "conscience" would have allowed Huck no such ability.

If James had been writing the story (if one could imagine James writing *Huckleberry Finn*), he would have ended it here. The moral crisis is resolved; the story proper is finished; anything added is another story. Mark Twain himself must have felt that way about it, for he shifted his center from Huck to Tom, and the rest is Tom's doings. I have never seen a convincing defense of the Tom Sawyer business; most readers dislike it, and even those who enjoy it regard it as a structural fault. After his famous encomium of the book, Hemingway called the Tom Sawyer part "just cheating." It was a hard book to end, for the farther the raft travelled down the river, the more difficult the freeing of Jim became. Many a writer today would leave the story unended. But the acceptability of the indeterminate ending, the unfinished story, dates in American literature from Sherwood Anderson. The fact remains that Mark Twain had a great moral crisis, but he wasn't artist enough to utilize it properly as a structural principle. He tried to continue the story after the crisis had been resolved, and his book falls to pieces.

When we come to our fifth illustration, *Sister Carrie*, we are confronted by the question, How does a writer fare when there is no moral crisis at all? For by the tenets of naturalism, man is not a moral agent and so can not experience a moral crisis. Dreiser's books are in effect a tremendous, massive attempt to exculpate his characters, to relieve them of all responsibility. He says in effect, "If you knew all the facts, you would see that Carrie could not have acted otherwise under the circumstances." Dreiser is in short an amoralist.

There are three places in the story at any one of which we should have had a quite satisfactory moral crisis if the story had been written by a moralist: where Carrie goes to live with Drouet, where Carrie allows herself to be abducted by Hurstwood, and where Carrie deserts Hurstwood. One can hardly say, where Carrie "decides," because the word implies moral choice, and Carrie makes no decisions, no moral choices. She is carried along by circumstances, and the author is at great pains to slide over these rough places, to smooth them out, to remove any possible feeling of crisis. He succeeds fairly well in the first two places but gets into difficulty, I think, in the third. The account of the disintegration of Hurstwood is done so thoroughly that Hurstwood steals the show: and as our interest in Hurstwood increases, the problem of making us sympathize with Carrie's desertion of him becomes more difficult. Dreiser's aim in his over-

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elaborate documentation here seems to be to demonstrate beyond any possible doubt that Hurstwood is *through*, that he will never get on his feet again, and that Carrie therefore is quite justified in deserting him. It is the ethic of social Darwinism: Dreiser had been reading Herbert Spencer. But it was surely myopic of him to think that the ethic of survival — the principle on which Carrie operated from first to last — would be acceptable to readers, most of whom could be supposed to have a certain amount of human, or even Christian, indoctrination.

Most people I know think *Sister Carrie* is inferior as a novel to the other novels examined in this paper. Might the absence of moral crisis be a reason? A passage in Eliot's *After Strange Gods* is pertinent at this point:

With the disappearance of the idea of Original Sin, with the disappearance of the idea of intense moral struggle, the human beings presented to us both in poetry and prose fiction today . . . tend to become less and less real. It is in fact in moments of moral and spiritual struggle depending upon spiritual sanctions, rather than in those "bewildering minutes" in which we are all very much alike, that men and women come nearest to being real. If you do away with this struggle, and maintain that by tolerance, benevolence, inoffensiveness, and a redistribution or increase of purchasing power, combined with a devotion, on the part of an elite, to Art, the world will be as good as anyone could require, then you must expect human beings to become more and more vaporous.

Possibly this is the answer. Carrie is certainly "vaporous." Nothing happens to her, really. There is no resolution, because there is nothing to resolve. She is less real than the other characters we have considered because there is no "intense moral struggle." And she is unreal despite the mass of documentation by which the author intends to make her real.

And that must be why naturalism never succeeded, why it has been given up for the most part. Those who continue in that vein are not so highly regarded any longer, I believe. The most highly regarded writers today — Faulkner and Warren for example — have gone back to the older concept of moral crisis. One would find, beyond doubt, such a concept operative as a structural principle in *All the King's Men* and in an extraordinarily complex way in *The Sound and the Fury*. To trace its operation in recent fiction — particularly in Southern fiction — would be a rewarding task which lies outside the intention of this paper. Suffice it to say here that the firmness of the principle in Hawthorne, Melville, and James, its weakening in Mark Twain, its abandonment in Dreiser, and its recovery in Faulkner and Warren are a sequence which seems to throw some light on our literary history and our spiritual history too.

# A Divine Tragedy

ALBERT HOWARD CARTER

As an impossible commandment confronts the Christian — "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48) — so also the member of the university pursues unattainable goals. As a Christian lives in a tension between the vision of a perfect nature and an existential knowledge that all nature is imperfect by nature and imperfectable by its own nature, so the university professor has a vision of what the university has been, can be, or even sometimes is, and this vision exists in tension with what he can too plainly see about him.

One pole of the divided world that the campus Christian worker must work in is not necessarily the ideal university, not what it essentially ought to be, but what the professor thinks it is. Above all, a professor believes that a university is a community of learners. We used to call it an institution of learning, but since we all ought to be in an institution, let's call it a community. And as for learning, let's keep our eyes on the people involved. A professor is there to learn, and he assumes that others are there for the same purpose. You will hear a great deal, the more you have to do with a university, of a mythical conflict between teaching and research. There is none. Both are modes, or processes, of learning. Buber has won many a professor's heart by pointing out that all real teaching is a dialogue. Thus if a teacher learns nothing from his students he is no teacher. Research, too, is a dialogue. We can find our facts, sort them, order them, file them, but we have not committed research (I use the phrase advisedly) until we communicate it either within our own walls or to the larger community of scholars within our discipline.

Though it sounds like the worst kind of Orwellian semantic dishonesty, comparable to "Freedom is slavery," I am in effect maintaining that teaching is learning and learning is teaching. Some professors, to be sure, in this community of learners have prejudiced views about who is to do the learning. Some you will find who think that only if a student knows what the boss-man has told him, can the student be called a learner, and some professors think that only if the professor learns is there any learning going on. Nearly six hundred years ago Chaucer defined the ideal in paying tribute to his Clerke of Oxenford:

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And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.

And don't forget the "gladly" part. We like to teach, we like to share what has given us satisfaction, we like it so much that we demand that our students get it and go so far as to say that only by demanding will we ever enable our students to participate with us in the dialogue of educated people. And gladly would we learn. We like to learn. Sometimes we learn from students, sometimes from books and test tubes and electronic computers and comma counters, sometimes from our colleagues, fellow professors, or fellow workers in the vineyard, the campus Christian lifers.

Whom do we teach? The answer is easy: we teach learners, only learners. Where there are no learners there is no teaching. But do not be deluded that we teach the child, not the subject. Such a cliché reveals a frightful ignorance of English, which makes use of both a direct and an indirect object. What do we teach? You can easily get an it-answer to this question by reading a catalogue or time schedule. What do we really, existentially, teach? Anything that comes into our heads.

Remember that we have trained minds, washed brains; we have magpie-collecting, accumulating, vacuum-sweeping minds. We have, as we say, open minds, open at the receiving end. We have ordering minds and evaluating minds. So we teach whatever comes into our heads and whatever we choose to let out. We are, above all, innovators. We would make new information, new ideas, and new people of ourselves and of our students. You must never ask a professor if he has good students. All students are good students. If they are not students, they are not good. If they are not good, they are not students. I'm not saying that all warm bodies connected with a university are learners, but more of that when we come to the other horn of the dilemma. The horn I am blowing now is the university as a community of learners.

The parts I have suggested. In what way is a university more than the sum of its parts? This is the community. An example may clarify. Not long ago, speaking with a group of faculty Christians, I said, "As Christian professors, we are not afraid of that nasty three-letter Anglo-Saxon word G-o-d." An outsider — one of God's children, granted — unused to the way professors talk, mistook the ironical purport of that crack and carried away the notion that I had uttered blasphemy of such proportions that it appeared, quoted by the Governor of our state, on the front page of the *Arkansas Gazette*. The community, in other words, is a place where our cracks, our shorthand, our jargon, our denotations, charged with elaborately meaningful connotations, are understood. Where they are not so understood, as in any other walk of life, there is no community.

We understand one another in a wider sense also: not only can we talk with one another, but we know that we are all together to learn, and so we learn from



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one another. We do not, as I have already suggested, have to spend time defining our goals and terms, except for fun. We — students and professors, if you still are used to making a distinction without a difference — are together for mutual protection, protection against ignorance and ferocity, in the firm conviction that learning even if it has no other demonstrable value, is fun. This is what a community of learners is. And we believe that learning is not a solitary or unilateral process but that it takes place most advantageously in a community.

I have accentuated the positive long enough. What are the forces working against us, against our community? If you have been attending critically, as I expect all intelligent people to do, the foregoing glowing words, you will have observed that all is not well, and you will not be surprised to hear me say that we are not after all one happy family. Let us descend by the stages of the hierarchy, the rungs of the academic ladder, and see what makes us unhappy. At the top of this ladder, as we descend into the inferno, is the Administration. They are our enemies. It is their devilish business to save money, and it is our angelic business to spend it. We must beggar-like pursue them with tin cups for books, papers, pencils, travel to meetings, mimeograph ink, offices, heat, and salaries to buy dishwashers, smoking tobacco, food, and other badges of necessity and respectability. As we see it, the Administration exists to supply us, to listen to us, and to know that we know what we are talking about. But the community falls apart at just this point because the Administration is not talking with us: it is out making a speech to the Rotary Club under the delusion that public relations can somehow redeem personal relations. And here I interject a theological note. I came to know what Karl Barth means by the Otherness of God through years of trying to get next to university presidents to ask for something. A president knows what you want before you ask it.

The president, the vice-president in charge of this, the vice-president in charge of that, the provost, the assistant to the president, the secretary to the assistant to the vice-president in charge of vice-presidents, the deans, the vice-deans — the pun is inevitable — the secretary to the assistant to the director of research, all add up to the fact that a professor spends most of his energy not in having ideas, which he is paid to have, but in trying to convince others to implement them. I use the term "implement" for two reasons: it is part of the jargon, and it suggests a tool as back-breaking and unsubtle as a plow.

Down the ladder we go: our colleagues. We are underpaid and overworked. And so we are irascible. I don't know what my colleague Professor Z knows; that's why we formed a community in the first place. But because I don't know what he knows, he is one-up on me. And I resent it. Besides, I see in him a great waste of talent. I've been bred — born too, probably, if the truth can ever be known — to think critically, and, brother, am I critical! Moreover he's a specialist. He's so busy writing books that he has no time to read any. Or he's so



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busy giving speeches (like this one) that he has no time to listen to any. The indictment continues. He's still in the university because he could not bear to leave the womb. The university was the last time he was supported by his family, and he will prolong his childhood. He's so sensitive that he needs constantly to be told how wonderful he is; and he's too sensitive for the real world. That's the professorial syndrome. This occupational neurosis is economically explicable also. A professor has spent years when he might have been earning good, as the expression goes, money, going to school, wearing messy, uninteresting clothes, eating less than luxuriously, only to enter a profession which pays him so little that he has to do housework instead of the research that he morally ought to be doing. And so he is envious: he envies the oil man who can write off his depreciation on oil lands in a way that the professor cannot write off his investment in graduate training. He envies the business man who wouldn't be caught dead having *his* conventions during the holidays as a professor does. He envies the physician whose title of "Doctor" earns him undying thanks, respect, and a Cadillac. A professor of my age went into the racket because it had certain advantages, most of which we have lost. Prestige? We are called egg-heads. Long summers for creative work and reconstruction of the battered psyche? Now we have to teach summer school to a bunch of tired schoolteachers to make ends meet. A salary which used to give us the edge during periods of depression? Now, they've come up with a new type of recession in which prices instead of coming down to help the salaried professional, go up! So if you've heard about the angry young men, you may be able to understand the angry young, middle-aged, and old professors. But let us leave his emotional problems and look at his behavior, to use a term popularized by the lamented Dr. Kinsey. For a full-dress sociological study with questionnaires and interviews and tables and percentages, I recommend to you the recent study by Theodore Caplow of the University of Minnesota and Reece J. McGee of the University of Texas called *The Academic Marketplace* and published in 1958 in New York by Basic Books. It is required reading. Here you will learn that a professor makes per year what a unionized bakery truck driver takes in, that professors usually prefer institutional prestige to monetary advantage (that they'll teach at a famous university for less money than they will at a less distinguished but worthy school), that their reputations are underwritten by the men in their field — another metaphor from agriculture. I couldn't begin to tell you how asinine professorial behavior is. It's in the book.

Let us look also at the way professors behave in the world of ideas. Since education is by nature conservative, a professor's beliefs are those of a former age and time. Many of the professors you meet will still believe in progress. Naturally they believe that what they are doing ought to make a difference in the lives of their students, but they extend this wish to a principle something like this: if we can

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educate people enough, somehow we can eliminate original sin. But as J. V. Langmead Casserley points out in *The Retreat from Christianity in the Modern World*, "our century and our lifetime [are] perhaps the bloodiest and cruelest in human history" so that "progress as a secular faith is plainly doomed." Many professors will tell you that you cannot possibly understand something *unless*. Mark well any statement that begins with "You cannot possibly understand." What it means is: "My understanding is one-track, limited to what I know." In the field of literature, my own field, for example, you will still find professors who believe that to study the life and times of an author is the only way to study poems. Certainly biography and sociology and history are legitimate, entertaining, rewarding studies, but they are not poetry, they are not drama, they are not, whatever else they may be, what I believe to be the best the world has known and felt and believed to be. Read Chad Walsh's indictment<sup>1</sup> — his warning to students — if you don't believe me that professors sometimes appear as a bunch of ideational cruds.

To descend still further, there are the enrollees at the university. I'll not dignify them by the name of students. To put it simply, they are unprepared and unmotivated. Think back on your own education. You know what you didn't learn. They haven't learned it either. Think of what you did learn. They've never heard of it. No, they haven't read the books you read. They can't even read. I am not kidding. Try a third-grade Bible quiz on them. Or go to the dean or counsellor in charge of such things and ask to see the reading scores of the entering freshmen. Then you'll know what you have to work with. But maybe you won't get to see such figures; they are sometimes carefully guarded — security, you know. Or maybe you won't be able to get in to see the dean in charge of such things. But we can quote a press release from the University of Illinois dated January 13, 1954: "Evidence has been found at the University of Illinois which shows that inadequacy in English has doubled among high-school graduates and tripled among college freshmen and sophomores in the last ten years. Results of a qualifying examination, given this semester, show that 42.6 per cent of the 864 students examined failed. In 1944-45 only 13 per cent failed." At one Great University recently a young man, a track star, was uncovered who read below the second-grade level. He was getting passing marks in philosophy and zoology because in these courses he had objective tests and was required only to make X, his mark, in the spaces provided. I am not saying that the uneducated should remain so. Most of the poor students in English, we find, are not unteachable, merely untaught. The unteachable are legion: my sister-in-law teaches in high school in Chicago where two thousand teen-agers have I.Q.'s of less than 80. Fortunately, we do not usually have to deal in the

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<sup>1</sup>"Professors You May Meet," *Presbyterian Life*, August 15, 1958, pp. 8-10.

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university with the unteachable, but a campus Christian worker ought to be aware of one of the reasons why so many enrollees in our schools are not students and may never be taught.

The next circle in this hell is reserved for all those activities (as distinct from people), that have no business being in a university. They fall under three headings: baby-sitting, trade schooling, and football. The first cancerous malfunction of our colleges, baby-sitting, is the result of our mistake: acceptance of the chore of taking care of adolescents until they are old enough to go out into the world as adolescent citizens and eventually become adolescent grandparents. Sometime sit down with a university program for a week and add up the number of hours for which passive entertainment is provided. No, you wouldn't believe it: movies, band concerts, date-nights, sings, queens, rallies, baton-twirling clinics. Subtract that total from the number of hours in a work week, and then ask yourself, when does a college student work? Sit in the main reading room of the library some evening when a fraternity has taken it over as a penal institution for pledges; you'll find so much distraction that you'll be unable to read with comprehension anything deeper or more demanding than the movie reviews in the *New York Times*. And so you cannot be around a university for long without asking whether the unmotivated should be in school at all.

In a disastrous attempt not to provide motivation but to nourish what motivation is mistakenly assumed to be present, baby-sitting easily led to the establishment and efflorescence of trade schools. Surely our civilization rests on ice cream and recreation and plumbing; but is plumbing, I ask you, as it is taught in a very distinguished university in Oklahoma, in any way related to plumbing the depths of the world of the mind as I first described it? Most schools of education are trade schools, where no one ever asks the question, Why educate? They tell us to teach the whole child — as if a half-child or any other fraction of a child ever presented himself to us for education. No, instead of studying education we study the coefficient of correlation and the validity of diagnostic tests, just as in psychology, remember, the proper study of mankind is no longer man but rats. Several recent studies have shown that the lowest intellectual level to be found in college students is that of the future teachers.<sup>2</sup> Among other reasons we may point to the fact that colleges of education usually require no foreign languages. But who needs to know more about the functioning of language than a teacher, and who needs to have a broader view of the international and intercultural world than a teacher? By the same token colleges of agriculture usually have no place in their curriculum for literature. And who needs to be able to read more than a farmer? In short I am inveighing against that kind

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<sup>2</sup>See R. M. Hutchins, "The Lesson of Krushchev's Little Red Schoolhouse," *Esquire*, June 1958, p. 86, to which I am indebted for the press release quoted above.

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of education where the means becomes more important than the end, where *how* to replaces *why* as the primary question.

And then there's football, which combines the worst features of the trade school and baby-sitting. What trade? The trade of football coaching and football promotion. And baby-sitting? Football baby-sits for more of our adolescent citizens than any other form of university life. Every time I go out of town to a non-university conference and am introduced as from the University of Arkansas, my new acquaintance invariably asks about some team, assuming that sports events were of primary importance to a representative of a university. To the great majority of people, the sports function of the University comes first, and I do not win friends by telling such questioners that I'd rather talk about our library, our fine-arts center, our honors program, than about gladiators. Football does not teach university students to win the game. Conceivably it might, if physical education rather than entertainment were the goal, if physical education departments could operate on budgets not impoverished by the demands of football; our students, yours and mine, are not taught, I say, to win the game, but to beat the game.

Then there's the town. In the town-gown tension, the town means the local city, the state, the country, the whole world. In my poor, strife-worn state, the kids say, "Yes, we can talk about compassion and decency and racial equality like this at the University, but we can't talk like this when we go back home." If you want to know what the beat generation is you need only look at our students. They are beat — beat by the unrealistic demands of the university and the too realistic demands of their towns. And make no mistake, it is our job, yours and mine, to beat this generation — to offer them a heart-breaking, a heart-tearing, and heart-rending choice.

The American people are just not interested in education; interested, that is, to the extent of paying for it. Here are some illustrations of what I mean. The nation has been shocked recently by the roasting alive of about a hundred kids in Our Lady of the Angels elementary school in Chicago. Even from our small provincial newspapers we can make inferences: there were no fire doors on the school; there was no sprinkler system. But every department store in Chicago has been required by law to have both, as long as I can remember, and no hotel has been constructed in Chicago without fire escapes since before the first World War. Did you do the simple arithmetic involved in the case? There were over two thousand kids in the school; there were forty rooms. How many, then, were packed into a single class room? To be sure, the Fire Commissioner tells us that all the pupils had desks, none had to stand — as if we might have expected schools to run without desks! Or here's another example of what I mean. In a recent study we made at the University of Arkansas, caught up perhaps in the enthusiasm engineered by the response to the challenge of Sputnik,

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we turned up the devastating statistic that eighty per cent of the top ten per cent of high-school graduates in Arkansas do not go to college. Do you still wonder at the results of recent elections in Arkansas? Here's another illustration, a little homelier perhaps, again from Chicago, so that you won't think that I'm a poor bird fouling its own nest. An intelligent, rich, socially-minded matron, whom I went to school with, was recently elected to the school board in the fashionable suburb where she lives. The *Chicago Tribune* carried the news in a half-inch story. In the same issue the *Tribune* carried a story running to several paragraphs in length reporting the luncheon — who was there, what she had on — which my friend's sister had given the day before. No, the American people are not interested in education. The McGraw-Hill Book Company in a recent full-page newspaper advertisement points out, "As far as financial incentives are concerned, we have virtually socialized the academic profession. . . . Ironically, the Soviet Union has deliberately and successfully used capitalist incentives to improve its educational system. . . . In the U.S., the average faculty salary is little more than the average income of industrial workers. In Russia, . . . the young Soviet graduate can see that it pays — and pays very well — to choose teaching as a career. A Russian professor earns eight times as much as an average Russian factory worker. . . . There is the recent example of a liberal arts college which discovered that five of its graduating seniors were being offered starting salaries higher than those paid any of their professors." The American people will spend money on what they think important, and obviously they rate education very low. And this is why a campus Christian worker has to work with a disgruntled, undervalued, precarious community, an enclave in a larger cultural group which is in practice hostile to it.

This world which sends its sons and daughters to the university is a divided world, hovering between what it says it wants and what it does to satisfy these and other wants, demanding assent to standards with no metaphysical sanction as the price of respectability and not respecting those who examine those standards. Oscar Wilde defined a cynic as a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing; in this sense, we in the university are trying to operate in a society of cynics. And this lowest rung of hell I have reserved for the cynics. W. H. Auden has described this world in revolution, this world of divided ideals in the great Fugal Chorus in praise of Caesar in his Christmas oratorio, *For the Time Being*. It comes just after the proclamation that sends Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and before the slaughter of the innocents, committed in the name of civilization and sanity, so that its irony is made manifest in its context: Caesar rules the world as indeed science rules our world. The poet exhibits the conflict between common sense and worldly wisdom and demonstrable fact, between certainty of operational fact which outlaws superstition, and belief which all Caesars think they can handle.



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This lowest rung of hell, in other words, suggests that the forces working against the university community as the professor envisions it and working against the ideals of the campus Christian worker are not wholly peculiar to the university but common, worldly, and age-old.

Dante's *Divine Comedy*, we are told, is so named because it has a happy ending: it begins in hell and ends in heaven. This talk began in heaven and ends in hell; and so I have called it "A Divine Tragedy." In the heaven part I have tried to show what campus Christians have to work with; in the hell part what they must work against. In a tragedy we usually expect a catharsis, a purification of the passions of pity and fear. I have tried to show you what there is to fear in a modern university, and I hope that I have aroused your pity for the community of learners. We are not one great big happy family. We are tragically unhappy. And because we are so thoroughly unhappy, we have joined a community of learners. Without a vision of what ought to be, Job could never have heard the Voice in the Whirlwind. And proudly enough, the professor sees himself as a kind of Job, complete with comforters, engaged in a divine tragedy.



# Books and Ideas

## Jesus Christ and Mythology

The eighteenth century theologians who defended Christian orthodoxy did so by hauling in for witness two types of evidence: that which purported to show that there is nothing intrinsically irrational about the claims of a special historical revelation, and that which insisted upon the actual facticity of what was thus not intrinsically irrational. The first was called internal, the second external (or historical) evidence. Almost one hundred years ago Mark Pattison, remarking upon these procedures said:

Argumentative proof that such [i.e., theological] knowledge is possible can never be substituted for the knowledge without detriment to the mental habit. What is true of an individual is true of an age. When an age is found occupied in proving its creed, this is but a token that the age has ceased to have a proper belief in it. (*Essays and Reviews*, 12th ed., p. 319.)

Since Pattison thought that of the two evils the external method was the worse, he would no doubt have agreed wholeheartedly with Lessing's famous dictum that was to be the earnest of a central theological problem for generations to come: "Accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason." If this be the case, why even submit them to the proof? Yet this proof, in one form or another, was precisely the goal of Christian orthodoxy.

The successors to orthodoxy did not formulate their affirmations in the same manner. Nevertheless they clearly affirmed a continuity of *intention* between themselves and their orthodox predecessors. They were haunted by the kind of issue which Lessing (among others) had posed. But they assented — for the most part enthusiastically — to a modification of the defense of the peculiarity and integrity of the Christian theological pursuit. The modification went part-way, but only part-way, in Pattison's direction. The successors to orthodoxy asserted that the condition for knowing what Christian theology is about is a lively relation of faith with the God who had revealed and ensconced himself among men in the person of Jesus Christ. With considerable justice they claimed the Reformers of the sixteenth century for the ancestry of this position. But neither the Reformers nor Mark Pattison went on from there to suggest that the fulfilment of this condition empowered the theologian to indicate the peculiar point of delimitation where

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*Jesus Christ and Mythology* by Rudolf Bultmann. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958, 96 pages, \$1.95.

#### THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

faith, theology, and its subject matter met with other *Weltanschauungen* or quests for meaning. The successors to orthodoxy among the theologians agreed with Pattison that to look for external evidences for the rational or supra-rational truth of revelation in Christ would be worse than evil. But they saw no reason why they should not appoint themselves arbitrators over the boundary and link of what constitutes faith and what does not, what constitutes internal and external evidence (or no evidence) concerning Christian theology.

One result — disconcerting all the way round — has been that, increasingly since the opening of the nineteenth century, theologians have not been in significant conversation with philosophers, to cite but one type of personage standing on the far side of the boundary: instead they have argued with other theologians whom they would accuse of surrendering the cause of theological integrity to the outsiders. To this charge the accused would reply that they most assuredly were relying on faith alone but that they represented the cause of theological relevance to culture, i.e., of methodological *Auseinandersetzung* with non-theological disciplines, whereas their accusers were not really theologians of faith but simply narrow, insular reprintinators. In the process the theological conversation with other disciplines has largely become a surrogate chat by theologians with other theologians.

Let not the innocent reader think even for a moment that the "theological renaissance" of our century has changed this situation one iota. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. The question of greatest concern to the majority of theologians is still something like Lessing's. However it is put, it almost invariably reduces to a discussion of the boundary between theology (or Christian faith) and some other subject matter, and of the legitimacy of expressing Christian faith in terms of that other subject matter. And theologians addressing themselves to the problem are answered and reviewed almost invariably and exclusively by other theologians. The issue is at present carried on in two almost completely separate discussions. The first is an enquiry into the meaning and status of theological statements in comparison to and distinction from other types of linguistic use. The second discussion has become an investigation into what kind of an understanding of history (if any) will bear the conception of a unique divine ingression into history. It is in this latter discussion, so much closer than the first to Lessing's original question, that Rudolf Bultmann's name is central.

*Jesus Christ and Mythology*, delivered in 1951 as the Shaffer and Cole Lectures in Yale and Vanderbilt Universities respectively, is a convenient and relatively clear summary of Bultmann's views. It is however more than that, for in the concluding chapter of this very small volume, Bultmann makes certain statements which, though they are anything but new, had been pushed so far into the background that it is rather surprising to see them reaffirmed. We all know by now that Bultmann believes that the Biblical gospel of the redemption of

mankind through Jesus Christ is expressed in a mythological form of which we must divest it in order to make it relevant to our day. A myth is an objective, worldly, fact-like, or human representation of what is in reality a transcendent actuality, an actuality which impinges solely in the form of a present event in and upon the decision-making life of a human being. Myth tells in the form of a cosmic story what can actually only be grasped in a particular present which is on the point of pushing into the future. Hence we are confronted with the task not of doing away with myth — for the heart of the Christian message, the kerygma, may well be contained in it — but of reinterpreting it by means of a non-mythological analysis. In the process of carrying out this assignment we are assisted by two factors: first, the New Testament itself; secondly, existentialist analysis.

The New Testament begins the process of demythologizing its own message by telling us in effect that the end of history, to which the eschatological content of the message constantly refers us, is not the abrupt cancellation of events in serial time. It is rather the resurrection of Christ in which his community now lives. The end of history is therefore here now — in the preaching and obedient hearing of Jesus as the Lord. Moreover the New Testament makes clear that the acts and sufferings so frequently described within its pages in terms of cosmic drama are actually anthropic and represent *hominem agentem* confronted with his freedom and its limits in the context of abiding historical insecurity.

What is thus begun in the New Testament is helped along by existentialist analysis, for it turns out upon close inspection that the central issue raised by the existentialists is at one with the wrestle of the New Testament authors. "Man's life," says Bultmann, "is moved by the search for God because it is always moved, consciously or unconsciously, by the question about his own personal existence. The question of God and the question of myself are identical." We must not interpret him to mean that existentialism, even in its non- or anti-theistic moods is theism unaware. Rather he is saying that existentialist analysis shows us what it is to exist instead of merely to subsist and that the question of God intrudes only into existence. Existentialist analysis does not take the place of that existential awareness and activity by means of which I am a being in freedom, nor does it show me the manner in which I am a self that is related to God. Existentialist analysis does however indicate the structure of the being and acts of true existence and thereby indirectly goads the thinker, reflecting upon existence, into taking the step from the reflective to the imperative attitude: I *must* exist. But the transition from the imperative to the indicative is beyond existentialist analysis. It is existential awareness at its highest. Indeed one may say that this transition, nay union of the indicative and the imperative, though present in existence always as a possibility, becomes an actuality only in faith, as existence is face to face with God in the message containing Jesus Christ.

The upshot of what we have said is that the existentialist analysis pushes us

into approaching the Bible with a prior understanding and imperative that correspond precisely to that question and imperative which the New Testament itself shows forth even as it answers them. For, Bultmann tells us, "in the Bible a certain possibility of existence is shown to me" which, if addressed personally to me, "gives me a real existence." This coincidence of New Testament interpretation and existentialist analysis solves all sorts of problems for Bultmann. First and most obviously he has now shown a way to demythologize the New Testament without robbing it of its essential message. Secondly he has suggested a way out of the bewildering problem of hermeneutics, of elucidating the principles of scriptural interpretation: the principles of understanding which we bring to the Scriptures are relevant to the Bible itself, and there need be neither conflict nor total lack of contact between critical understanding and the acknowledgment of Biblical authority. Thirdly a sense of historical continuity in the interpretation of meaning has been preserved in the face of the claims of a radical historical relativism. In the fourth place Bultmann has given us an interpretation of history in which revelation is not represented as a series of special, supposedly factual "saving" events in the midst or imposed on top of those secular events which are manifest to any observer of history. He has in other words done away with *Heilsgeschichte*, for he regards such special "saving" events as actually mythological or at least quasi-mythological accounts. A direct consequence is that Bultmann rejects every miraculous conception of revelation according to which God "intervenes between the natural, or historical, or psychological course of events." Thus

The thought of the action of God as an unwordly and transcendent action can be protected from misunderstanding only if it is not thought of as an action which happens between the worldly actions or events, but as happening within them. The close connection between natural and historical events remains intact as it presents itself to the observer.

All of the above-mentioned points have been subjected to searching criticism. In his replies Bultmann has generally tried to stay as close as possible to those affirmations which he thinks follow from hermeneutical principles. But in the last chapter of this book he throws caution to the winds and deals with some more general implications of his position. To speak of "God as acting" and even of "prevenient grace" is to make statements that qualify seriously the reduction of all theological to anthropological knowledge which Bultmann has generally undertaken. It is all very well to claim that "God as acting" or "as creator" is understood only in terms of a relationship involving my existence. Bultmann here tells us in effect that there is something, given in relation to my existence, that transcends my existence radically — even if it is grasped only *in* my existence. Surely this means that the transcendent has its own character even if the statements we can make with regard to it are completely minimal. Yet some such statements must be made if Bultmann is not everlastingly to be exposed to the suspicion that all

ne talks about is the self being reconciled to itself by itself. When I say that God "as acting" is in my present and personal history, I am obliged to make clear that God is more than an instance of a crucial or even transcendent occasion I have set for myself. "Who is God?" is a question no Christian theologian can avoid. But what reply will not, on Bultmann's own terms, be completely mythological, i.e., the reduction of the transcendent to a factual object? Bultmann tries to avoid this difficulty by claiming that to speak of God as acting, creative, etc. is to talk in terms of analogy to "purely personal" human relationships. However he does not specify how he distinguishes between mythological or literal and analogical language about God and divine-human relationships. He says:

We can understand the meaning of the term Father as applied to God by considering what it means when we speak to our fathers or when our children speak to us as their fathers. As applied to God the physical import of the term father has disappeared completely; it expresses a purely personal relationship. It is in this analogical sense that we speak of God as Father.

One blinks in astonishment! Is this the final upshot of the vigorous existentialist revolt against the anthropomorphisms of the liberal tradition? What — especially in the absence of every interpretation of analogy — could be more mythological, as Bultmann understands the term, than this sort of statement?

A similar difficulty appears when we reflect about Jesus Christ. If we claim that he is more than the transition from possible to actual existence of the self to whom the kerygma is addressed, what language and conceptuality do we have to back up that claim except something that looks suspiciously like mythology (in Bultmann's terms)? Critics have often raised this last difficulty, suggesting that Bultmann has failed to de-mythologize the Christ event itself. There, it seems to them, the old orthodox "objectification" of transcendence as a factual, human event wins out. The interesting thing is that both orthodox and liberal theologians have joined in this objection against Bultmann. It is difficult to see how he can reply convincingly to the criticism. He may draw so sharp a distinction between natural, psycho-physical being and personal existence that the old idealistic depreciation of nature in favor of reason will pale by comparison. But then if he claims that God and the kerygma appear only internally, i.e., in personal, historical being and not in the continuity of natural, historical sequence, what really wins out: faith or general unintelligibility?

We return to the beginning: Bultmann has guarded the boundary between theology and whatever lies beyond. He has tried to indicate in what sense history is secular, in what sense it is open to revelation. Does the methodological demarcation assist us in overcoming Mark Pattison's strictures upon orthodoxy and,



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#### BOOKS AND IDEAS

by implications, its successors? Like most theologians, Bultmann does not want to indicate the actual veracity of theological claims but only the manner of their possibility. Pattison at any rate would doubt that he has succeeded or, if he has, that his success is significant for the proper exercise of theological reasoning.

HANS W. FREI

#### Existence

All those interested in psychological sciences will be grateful for the appearance in English of so rich a presentation of phenomenology and existentialism in the service of healing. It is long overdue, since for some years language barriers have prevented American scientists from becoming intimately acquainted with this important European movement.

From brief contacts with it, many people have sensed that there is something formidable about this movement. The very words "phenomenology" and "existential" tend to induce uneasiness if not mild phobia. Part of this is sheer lack of familiarity, especially on the part of the medical and social scientists. Our literary circles have had a taste of Sartre and Camus; our theologians know about Kierkegaard and Tillich; our philosophers are acquainted with Heidegger, Husserl, and Jaspers. But our medical men and our social scientists have as yet scarcely had their turn. What can *they* learn from this new book?

First of all, they will learn that existentialism is not a new system of thought but rather a kind of plea for the erection of some real doubt about the validity of *any* well-rounded system or streamlined theory about man. Existentialism is fascinated by the turbulence, the inner contradictions, the freedom, the paradoxicalness and disorderliness of human life. It is interested in the present and future rather than in the past. It distrusts deterministic science and rebels against many traditional dichotomies (epistemological or anthropological) which are implied in the various sciences dealing with man.

Rollo May gives an excellent review of the aims of existentialism in the first two chapters. Unfortunately he also offers, in contrasting the existentialist program with psychoanalysis, some absurd reductions of psychoanalytic theory and technique.

Applications of phenomenology to psychiatric material are presented by Minkowski (on schizophrenic depression), Strauss (on aesthesiology and hallucinations) and Von Gebattel (on the world of the compulsive). These emphasize

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*Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology* edited by May, Angel, and Ellenberger. New York: Basic Books, 1958, 445 pages, \$7.50.

that phenomenology attempts to understand the individual psychiatric patient in his uniqueness, his "otherness" and in his "totality" by a painstaking, rich, open, perceptive, an theoretically unbiased mind. This is nice to have for *any* understanding. But they also show that in the attempt to do this, generalizations constantly take place from individual concepts to class concepts, so that the phenomenologist is always in danger of ending up with ideal-types. It is refreshing to read these models of patient, unhurried, detailed description. At the same time it becomes clear that the descriptive work of phenomenology is often not as pure and unguided as some of its adherents believe. Logical and epistemological categories are frequently invoked.

In the third part of the book the reader is presented with papers, three by Binswanger and one by Kuhn, on "Existential Analysis." This section shows much interpenetration between the phenomenological methodology and existentialist ideology. This is by far the most difficult, complex and confusing section; it contains also the most wordy and exasperating part: Binswanger's case of Ellen West. It is difficult to see just what the American reader will learn from these pages other than a new terminology. One may ask what the difference is between a novel, a philosophical essay, and a psychiatric case study; one may also ask whether the unity of the patient at which the studies aim is not in part dissolved by the *a priori* categories under which he is described. And the ontological idea of a "world design" seems really a step backward from the sober empiricism of academicians and practitioners of this country with its traditional interest in the relations between the person and his world. After all it was in this area that Adolf Mayer worked and where Goldstein found an attentive audience. In contrast to the situation in Europe, a Leibnitzian or a Berkleyan view of personality has never been germane to American psychiatry and psychology.

Ellenberger's chapter is perhaps the most useful, clear, helpfully didactic and informative of this book. It is singularly free from bias, untainted with the "againstness" which mars several other chapters. Ellenberger renders one of the greatest services which the protagonists of "A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology" could ask for; namely the establishing of historical connections between the "old" and the "new" in psychiatry.

And this leads to the pertinent question: Do we really need new dimensions in psychiatry just now, or do we need greater expansion, articulation, precision, explanatory power, and synthesis? Dimensions have the dreadful habit of becoming isolated and incomparable, like the concepts that some patients have of themselves. But is not uniqueness, after all, only a special case of commonality?

PAUL W. PRUYSER and KARL MENNINGER

### The Southern Temper

In *The Southern Temper* William Peters sets out to identify and describe the forces on both sides of the segregation-desegregation controversy and to assess their relative strength and their potentiality for eventual victory. In preparing this work Mr. Peters travelled throughout the South, interviewing persons representing all shades of opinion, from extreme segregationists such as Sheriff Willis McCall of Lake County, Florida, and Alabama's State Senator Sam Englehart, to outspoken desegregationists such as the NAACP's Southeastern Secretary, Ruby Hurley, and Sarah Patton Boyle of Charlottesville, Virginia. In addition to his interviews Peters has become well-acquainted with the literature in the area of Southern race relations and has extended his knowledge through investigations into specific situations which aroused his interest.

The white population in the South does not present the monolithic opposition to desegregation in schools which we are often led to expect, according to Peters. He sees rather a division into roughly three groups which vary in relative size in different parts of the South. In one group are those who favor abiding by the Supreme Court decision, and among them will be persons who feel that the decision is morally right or that it is "the law of the land" and therefore ought to be obeyed. On the other hand are the extreme pro-segregationists, the active members of the White Citizens Councils and the Ku Klux Klan, and others.

The largest number of Southern whites, Peters believes, have no deep commitment either to segregation or to desegregation. While this group appears to be with the segregationists, its members are more comfortable with the *status quo* which happens now to be segregation. When desegregation becomes the *status quo*, they will support it or at least acquiesce in it.

In addition to the fact of racial prejudice it is clear that support of segregation is bound up with the power structure of the plantation areas of the South. The power elites, which control these areas and, through the heritage of rotten borough apportionments that go back to slavery, the state governments, do not easily surrender this power. The segregation issue has moreover been used as an anti-union measure; so that a New York-owned factory in Mississippi has used the AFL-CIO's support of the Supreme Court decision to defeat a union which had previously signed up an overwhelming majority of the workers in a union election.

Notable among the hopeful forces from the point of view of desegregation are the church women, many of the clergy, some newspaper editors, and the extraordinary leadership that is emerging among Southern Negroes. Many of these

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*The Southern Temper* by William Peters. New York: Doubleday, 1959, 283 pages, \$3.95.

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people have persisted in their beliefs and activities in the face of intimidation, economic reprisals, and actual acts of violence.

Of particular interest to this reviewer was Peters' discussion of the ambivalent and ambiguous role of the Federal government with reference to the Southern racial situation. Since 1950 the military establishment has given an object lesson in the practicability of desegregation on military posts in the South. Thousands of Negro and white civilian employees of the military spend their daily working lives in integrated situations, working alongside persons of the "other" race or serving Negro and white military personnel on a non-segregated basis. Tens of thousands of Southern young men and women sleep, eat, and train in mixed organizations. A comparative study of the process by which our formerly highly segregated armed forces have been desegregated has been made under Pentagon contract by university and private social research organizations. The three-volume report of this survey, ironically titled *Project Clear*, is marked SECRET and is therefore unavailable to the school boards and administrators of the South who would find it valuable as they embark upon compliance with the law of the land. It is perhaps no coincidence that the heads of both the House and Senate Armed Services Committees are Georgians.

While the President's Committee on Government Employment Policy issues optimistic reports on its work, Peters found practically no Negroes in Southern offices of Federal agencies above the level of janitor. (This is not true of the Post Office Department where Negroes have traditionally served as clerks and carriers throughout the South.) Peters also thinks that it is beyond coincidence that so large a number of Negro and white desegregationists have been subjected to field investigations by the audit divisions of their district Internal Revenue Service, and his evidence for this belief is quite convincing.

Peters concludes that the events of the fall of 1958 narrowed down the issues in the segregation-desegregation struggle. He observes that "the issue of segregation versus 'integration' became almost lost among the various new issues as the first public schools were closed in Arkansas and Virginia. The question became one of public schools versus private schools, and then, rapidly, of public schools versus no schools at all.

"And second, as the issues narrowed in scope and the political gains from an espousal of desegregation became clearer, the Eisenhower Administration, led by its new Attorney General, William P. Rogers, shifted delicately to a more positive posture." These, along with other developments, portend an eventual end to compulsory school segregation even in the Deep South, though this will probably take many years.

*The Southern Temper* is a balanced, workmanlike job of reporting and analysis, and it deserves to be read widely, both above and below the Magnolia Curtain.

CHARLES R. LAWRENCE.

### Religion and the State University

This volume was published in preparation for a conference on that theme which was held at the University of Michigan on November 16-19, 1958 under the sponsorship of the Centennial Committee of the University of Michigan and in cooperation with The National Conference of Christians and Jews.

Editor Walter in his preface sets the theme for this collection of essays: it deals with "the problems that arise in developing curricula in religion, and in finding a place for religious worship within the university itself." This statement provides a perspective for the discussion and says volumes about what has been happening in state universities in the last decade. It may be, as Walton Bean, one of the contributors to the volume, suggests, that we are entering "an age of reintegration in higher learning." If so, some resolution of the confusions and concerns which perplex educators and churchmen alike is imperative.

The volume recognizes that there must be some appropriate role for religion in the State University. The problems are what and how. This collection of essays is a brave if partially unsuccessful attempt to speak to these questions. It is a good book however and certainly will provide a locus of discussion until a better one comes along.

A quick glance at the table of contents shows a fairly complete outline of the problems and questions which concern us all. For this reviewer there is no question that the section on religion and the disciplines is by far the best, though my own judgment is undoubtedly colored by what happened or didn't happen at the Michigan Conference. Theodore Green's chapter on "Religion and the Humanities" is an illuminating statement of educational philosophy. Kenneth Boulding quite brilliantly describes some of the difficulties and opens imaginative possibilities in his chapter on "Religion and the Social Sciences." George Shuster's essay, in his usual impressive style, describes vividly the vacuum in professional education. Paul Kauper's statement on "Law and Public Opinion" should set many minds at rest on the legal question.

That the chapters dealing with the analysis of the student community are not the best in the book is not an accident nor the fault of the authors. They have the uninviting task of trying to make some sense out of what is a confused mass. If the curricular problems of universities are jungle-like, one can only say that the so-called co-curriculum is educational chaos. In spite of all the protestations to the contrary, the co-curriculum is obviously of peripheral concern to the

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*Religion and the State University* edited by Eric A. Walter. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958, 323 pages, \$6.50.



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university. Yet ironically enough the co-curriculum is usually the only place at which religious institutions are related to the university. These essays however should be read for an insight into the moral, religious, pluralistic, and cosmopolitan complexity of the modern large campus.

It should be abundantly clear, after reading this book and attending this conference, that it is not possible to talk about *the* State University. State universities are universities like any other. Each has its own peculiar history, tradition, practice, policies, and philosophies. Constituencies, social and political pressures, and public attitudes vary from institution to institution. Some have relative autonomy, some are closely supervised by state governments, some have private sources of finance, others depend entirely upon legislative appropriation. When in the same State there can be three state universities governed by the same state laws presumably yet operating under completely variant philosophies vis-a-vis religion, it is folly to talk about religion and *the* State University. Each of these universities in its own way tries to fulfill its legitimate responsibilities to its public and at the same time be loyal to the scholarly community.

In this connection Paul Kauper's chapter assures us that the so-called separation principle has a greater degree of ambiguity than many people have imagined. If the separation principle, he rather amusingly points out, requires that state universities cannot take account of religion or religious matters, "it becomes extraordinarily remarkable to what extent our state universities for almost a century have engaged in unconstitutional practices!" Constitutional limitations nevertheless are important, but the State University, as any university, must exercise its own discretionary authority on religious matters, just as on any question of academic policy. It seems clear however that there are no compelling legal reasons why religious institutions and state universities should not work out a concordat and develop a covenant relationship to their mutual benefit. This is not a fact to be exploited but to be appreciated.

While all of this may clarify the legal situation, it only changes the context of the discussion. Universities are still faced with the problem of the status of religion in the educational enterprise. For example what is the status of ultimate questions within the university? Both religious and non-religious persons are genuinely concerned about this question. The discussion of the volume takes place mainly around the curricular question. There is not room here for discussion of the variety of methodologies for the teaching of religion — such as the three primary faith approach, the interdisciplinary approach, or teaching by religious groups for credit. Needless to say, the variety of methods needs exploration. It is also interesting to note here that 97% of the state universities do teach courses in religion in one way or the other. I only want to remark that the pluralistic approach to learning in the modern university seems to me to leave ample room for intelligent dialogue, instruction, and research about ultimate



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issues. Would anyone seriously deny that this is done anyway and every day in many other disciplines than religion? Nonetheless there are intelligent and objective persons who raise questions about the status of theology as a discipline and the legitimacy of revelation as an epistemology.

To my mind it is evident that religious studies with their particular methodologies can be pursued under the same canons of scholarship to which other disciplines adhere. This may be bias. If so charged, I would want to ask if advocates of the contrary point of view are as objective as they presume. There must be on every university campus a sizable group of persons who feel that they must stand as an embattled garrison against the flood tide of religious zeal which is now in "vogue" and who fear that representatives of organized religion want to overrun universities. They have a fear of being "engulfed" by this current "fad" and therefore feel great responsibility to drag their feet a bit. Actually this so-called "upsurge of religiousness" disturbs equally but completely differently two sets of people. On the one side persons in religion know full well that their concern is not the all-consuming interest of universities, and on the other side are these persons who somehow develop a minority complex. It is true that to an amazingly large extent state universities over the years have given their friendly blessing to religion and religious organizations. It would be a mistake however to assume that what has been will continue to be. From where I stand, people who fear being engulfed exaggerate out of all proportion the influence of organized religion, whether on the policies of the university or in our culture.

In this respect I think Professor Frankena's chapter on "A Point of View for the Future" is worth a great deal of discussion among persons, whether interested in or afraid of religion in the university. I found this chapter both irritating and informative. It was irritating 1) because of its attempt at "neutralism" and 2) for what appeared to me to be gratuitous counsel on the canons of scholarship. While Professor Frankena is rather kind in his skepticism about the possibility of theology as a discipline, there are today so many people who, not knowing any better, oft times have the unmitigated gall to assume that no theologian can possibly deal with the religious studies in fairness, with a respect for differences of point of view, and without indoctrination. Why is it in these days that so many scholars in other fields take every occasion to raise this question? To assume that any person with an ultimate concern or commitment lacks critical judgment is to run perilously close to a pharisaism which refuses to recognize its own presuppositions or partial insights. I suspect that Dr. Frankena comes close to an ultimate commitment of his own, while advocating neutrality, when he concludes his chapter: "I am not convinced [that neutrality is impossible] but as we believe in democracy let us ask the university to approximate it."

While it is fair enough to address these questions to the university and its members, they should be addressed also to religionists and religious institutions.

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To what degree are religious institutions prepared to assume some common heritage of religious knowledge which will serve as a basis for study in the university? Granting all the important differences, is there not common a core of faith and value in what we commonly refer to as the Judaeo-Christian tradition? Are the churches prepared to allow the university qua university to carry on an intelligent discussion of these ultimate questions without interference? While it seems to me axiomatic that any full-blown program in religious studies would take fully into account the varieties of religious response, this can only be done by persons who have a primary commitment to and a thorough-going identification with the university. This is not to say that the university could not employ "Buber, Maritain, Berdyaev, or Niebuhr," but it is to say that the university would be primarily concerned about their competence as scholars and only secondarily about their religious tradition. Further the churches have no right to think of the Department of Religion as a kind of religious spearhead. The theological disciplines must not only be reflective but critical and must identify themselves with other disciplines, not just to "baptize" them but to take seriously the inter-disciplinary ramifications.

Finally, and all too briefly, both the Michigan Conference and the Centennial volume never seriously came to grips with the "Church and university question." This silence is a disarming admission so it seems to me of the inability of the Church and the university to confront each other. I have already indicated my

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#### BOOKS AND IDEAS

belief that the discipline of religious studies is primarily a function of the university. I need to add that this discipline should have the same relationship to religious institutions as other disciplines have to their various constituencies: viz., to serve them, to be responsive to their need, but not to have its policy dictated by non-university agencies. There is still a basic question about how the religious denominations not only serve in but serve the university as well as being adjacent to the university campus. I can only register here my opinion that the book reflects correctly the inadequate conception of the religious task on the part of denominations which can only end in confusion and frustration. This is not, I believe, only a problem of the definition of the role of a religious foundation, but whether religious leaders or representatives have the necessary austere intellectual discipline to provide any special cutting-edge towards the modern mind. As churchmen we are tempted to give petty and trivial answers to great and ultimate questions when we ought to understand more deeply and interpret more effectively our message. Our responsibility here is not only to discuss the questions that members of the university are interested in discussing and to do this in a way that makes sense to them, but also to assist the university in its stupendous task by identifying with it in all its strengths and weaknesses.

It would be foolhardy to overlook the false images which maintain in the university about organized religion. I do not know how the Church or the Synagogue can be the Church and the Synagogue without being organized religion, but unless it becomes more than that, I fear it will not do much good. In any event I firmly believe that we must as Jews and Christians communicate to the university community that we are groups who have experienced a reality by which we have been grasped, and that on the whole we are fellowships of brokenness standing as deeply in the need of grace as any other community or group.

Space does not allow for a discussion of the many facets of this relationship including the problem of religious pluralism. Suffice it to say that we are at present only on the threshold of what can be an exciting era in the universities of this country. Whether or not churches and universities can be communities of mutual concern is still an open question. But in an era of rapid expansion of state universities, where according to statistics as many as 75% of our students will be educated, we are faced with a situation which requires reconsideration of all philosophies and strategies. The cold facts of numbers of students, building programs, and revolutionary changes in curricula only point to an expanding era which make all our efforts seem puny indeed.

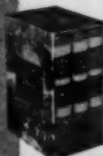
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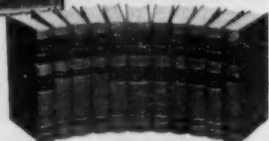
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### The Liberal Arts College

This book is a history of the concept and practice of the American college. In writing it Professor Schmidt has had in mind the staggering number of young people who will seek higher education. He believes that they and their parents will gain most from college only if they understand something of the origins and present organization of the American system of higher education and in particular the role of the liberal arts college in that scheme.

The first six chapters deal with the casual beginnings of the American college in the Colonies and its predominant characteristics down to approximately the end of the nineteenth century. Two dominating forces are described. On the one hand higher education is shown to have been the child of religion as most of the colonial colleges made the training of ministers of the gospel their primary aim. An even more potent force in Professor Schmidt's opinion however was the course of study brought over from Europe known as the classical tradition. The opening paragraph of this chapter well states the meaning of those liberal arts and sciences which he calls the classical tradition:

"As old as Western civilization itself, the liberal arts have undergone many changes in content through the centuries. Various fields of knowledge have at one time or another been included, only to grow obsolete and to be replaced by new ones. Underneath all such changes, however, a persistent idea remained intact. In all ages the pursuit of the liberal arts has meant the attempt of men to discover, by the free use of their faculties, something of the nature and meaning of the universe, man's place in it, and the highest values to which human life can attain. Put in another way, the liberal arts and sciences were those subjects of general interest and importance that were considered the indispensable intellectual equipment of an educated person."

Professor Schmidt goes on to show how the unity of the early college was finally shattered around the turn of the twentieth century by the "triple assault of the evolutionary hypothesis, the popularizers of Freud, and the temptations of uncontrolled material wealth . . ." By this time the university had come into its own and had often submerged the college in its "atomistic totality of scholars." The emergence of the university is attributed to three main sources: the philosophy of the new state universities that society has a responsibility for public higher education and that such education "must be made available in the interest of democratic equality and national unity to everyone who qualified"; German scholarship and higher criticism with its freedom of choice and expression for both student and teacher, its insistence on the establishment of facts through rigorous scientific method, and its complete devotion to rationally determined truth; and

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*The Liberal Arts College: A Chapter in American Cultural History* by George P. Schmidt. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1957, 310 pages, \$6.00.



#### THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

finally the new Darwinian theories which brought the scientists into their own and called for a reappraisal of accepted values and old approaches to specific subjects.

One chapter deals with the twentieth century controversy between Dewey and Hutchins. Professor Schmidt, at the risk of oversimplification as he says, identifies the one as the creator of the progressive viewpoint and the other as the champion of the conservative position. He shows how Dewey's insistence upon the individual contributes to the flexibility of a college curriculum and the elective system. On the other hand Hutchins insists upon the study of classic books as representing the great tradition which every educated person must know. Professor Schmidt speaks of the "critical powers necessary for a full understanding," but it is not clear to me that he gives Hutchins credit at this point for identifying these powers with the liberal arts. These Hutchins would consider to be both an end of a college education and a means to greater human understanding. As I understand Hutchins' position, he does not claim that "the liberal arts are identical with the heritage of the great books" as Professor Schmidt seems to think. There is a timelessness in the ideas discussed in many of these books which makes them applicable to present day situations. To treat them as museum pieces or as stages in man's evolving thought is to obscure their usefulness in developing man's intellectual powers or skills.

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## BOOKS AND IDEAS

One might wish that Professor Schmidt had offered his definition of a liberal education somewhat earlier than the eleventh chapter. There he quite rightly says that it is "not a thing of precise definition like an isosceles triangle, nor is it a fixed list of courses in a college catalogue taken over a given period of years." He then goes on to say that it means "knowledge: verified and dependable information about the world of nature and its everchanging contemporary forms. It means trained skills and abilities: to use one's own language effectively and one or more foreign languages adequately; to think critically — itself a cosmos of more specific skills; to judge intelligently among alternatives; to participate helpfully in social situations. It means appreciation of people; of the moral and spiritual quality of actions; of human imagination whether displayed in painting or music, in poetry or drama, or in mathematics, astronomy, or physics."

Some readers will take exception to the inclusion or exclusion of particular colleges and universities. Professor Schmidt recognizes this in his preface and states that he has arbitrarily chosen certain institutions as representative of particular movements and situations. The numerous examples and quotations from catalogues and the like, interesting and amusing as they are, sometimes divert the reader from the development of the thesis.

The reader will find useful chapters on the old-time college president "whose lengthened shadow" the college often was and on the evolution of women's colleges from their "wispy and tentative programs" as female seminaries. The chapter on transformation and rival loyalties describes the disappearance of compulsory chapel and the problems of student life on the contemporary American campus.

Finally there is an instructive chapter on academic freedom commencing with American admiration for German *Lernfreiheit* and *Lehrfreiheit* and concluding with the problem of loyalty oaths. Professor Schmidt asks that the non-conformist be permitted expression and points out that the non-conformity of Jesus had the profoundest effect upon history.

"There is the old and the new. We need both, for one supplements the other. What was said by them of old time contains the wisdom of the ages, which the liberal college must preserve and transmit to posterity. But whenever a prophet of new ideals arises to speak with the authority that rests on fullness of knowledge and conscientious conviction, it is the duty of the liberal college to give him a hearing."

Perhaps this book might better be entitled "The Concept of the American College" or "The Changing American College" for the liberal arts college in its true sense has been fighting a losing battle to the forces of specialization and vocationalism. The great question is its ability to re-assert its true mission and to lay primary emphasis upon helping a man to realize his potentialities as a man.

## THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR

If it succeeds it will only have begun the education of a man, but the impetus will have been imparted to each young graduate to go on learning for the rest of his life, using those tools which are indispensable for learning and understanding — the liberal arts.

RICHARD D. WEIGLE

### CONTRIBUTORS TO THE BOOKS AND IDEAS SECTION

Dr. Hans W. Frei is Assistant Professor of Religion at Yale University and is currently on leave of absence for study in Göttingen, Germany.

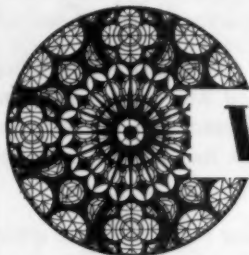
The Rev. Luther H. Harshbarger is Chaplain of The Pennsylvania State University.

Dr. Charles R. Lawrence is Chairman of the Social Science Group at Brooklyn College.

Dr. Karl Menninger is Director of the Menninger Foundation for Psychiatric Treatment, Education, and Research and is author of *Love Against Hate* and other books.

Dr. Paul W. Pruyser is coordinator of relations of religion and psychiatry at the Menninger Foundation.

Dr. Richard D. Weigle is President of St. John's College, Annapolis, Maryland. For three years he served as chairman of the Commission on Liberal Education of the Association of American Colleges.



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# FACULTY CONFERENCES

1959-1960

*December 4-6, 1959* — National Consultation on the Role of Theological Study in the Faculty Christian Movement; Seabury House, Greenwich, Conn.

*Late January, 1960* — Minnesota Conference on Christianity and Higher Education; University of Minnesota; sponsored by the North Central Area Collegiate YMCA.

*February 5-7, 1960* — General Committee of the Faculty Christian Fellowship; New York City.

*February 20, 21, 1960* — Oklahoma - Arkansas Faculty Conferences on "What is an Adequate Theology for a Christian Engaged in Higher Education?" Speaker: the Rev. Keith W. Irwin, FCF Executive Director. Oklahoma State University; sponsored by the Southwest Regional Council of the Student YMCA and YWCA.

*March 5, 6, 1960* — South Central Texas Faculty Conference on "The Merits and Dangers of One-Sidedness in the Teaching Profession." Speaker: the Rev. Keith W. Irwin, FCF Executive Director. Camp Holden, Texas.

*March 12, 1960* — Missouri Faculty Christian Fellowship Conference; Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri.

*March 26, 1960* — Faculty Christian Fellowship Conference; New York Area.

*March 31, 1960* — A "cluster" Faculty Christian Fellowship Conference; Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa.

*April 1, 2, 1960* — Iowa Faculty Christian Fellowship Conference on Theology and Education. Speaker: Dr. Bernard Loomer, University of Chicago. 4-H Camp, Luther, Iowa.

*If you know of any additional meetings or conferences for the following year, please send as much pertinent information as possible to the Faculty Christian Fellowship, 475 Riverside Drive, New York 27, New York.*

